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"You are to have one hundred dollars with you," said she, "so that if you do not get on well you may have something in reserve. This man loans them to you" —

"Gives, gives," whispered Pedro, brushing past them into the street.

"Loans them to you," repeated the mother, just as though he had not spoken; "I shall pay him back again." She took a kerchief from her own neck, tied it about her daughter's, and said, —

"You must write as soon as you are doing well, but not before."

"Mother!"

"And then he will row you to the vessel that is lying out in the harbor."

"O my God! Mother!"

"Well, I think there is nothing more. I can go no farther."

"Mother, mother!"

"The Lord be with you now! Farewell!"

"Mother, forgive me, mother!"

"And do not take cold on the sea."

She had drawn her daughter gently out of the garden gate and now closed it.

Petra stood motionless outside, her eyes fixed on the closed gate. She felt as wretched and lonely as it is possible for a mortal to be. But

at this moment there darted up a presentiment, a faith, out of exile, injustice, and tears: it was like a flickering fire, now kindled, now dying away, at one moment flaming up into the air, and then quite sinking away, but suddenly flashing into a glorious burst of splendor. She raised her eyes, and once more profound darkness surrounded her.

Through the deserted street of the little town, past the shut-in, leafless gardens, past the closed houses, where no light was burning, silently and slowly, she walked after him, whose slouching form, in big boots and cloak that made it seem headless, dragged wearily along. They came out into the avenue, where once more they trod on withered leaves and saw the spectre-like, upward-stretched boughs, with extended fingers clutching at them. They crept down the hill-side behind the yellow shed where the boat was kept; he at once began bailing out the water, then rowed her out from the shore, which soon shrank into a black mass, over which darkly lowered the sky. Fields, houses, forest, mountain, all were wiped out; nothing could she now distinguish of all that had been familiar to her from childhood up until yesterday: it had shut itself in from her as had the town, the people, that night when she was made an

outcast from them, and there was none to bid her farewell.

On the deck of the ship that was anchored close to shore, waiting the morning breeze, a man was pacing up and down. As soon as he perceived them beneath the quarter, he lowered a ladder, helped them on board, and gave notice to the captain, who promptly appeared on deck. She knew them, and they knew her; but there were no questions, no signs of sympathy. Simply as a matter of course she was told where her berth was, and what she was to do if she needed anything, or should be sick. The latter she was indeed the moment she went down in the cabin, and so as soon as she had changed her clothes she went on deck again. A familiar odor greeted her—ah! it was chocolate, and she was seized with an overpowering hunger, which tore and raged through her, and then the same man who had received them came forth from the cook-room bearing a whole bowl full of chocolate and some cakes. They came from her mother, he said. While she was eating he furthermore informed her that her mother had sent a chest on board, containing her best clothes, with her linen and woollen garments, besides food and other good things. At this moment there rose within her a vivid

remembrance of her mother, a sublime picture, such as she had never had before, but which she would retain through her whole future life. And in the presence of this image, sorrowfully and prayerfully, she made a solemn vow that she would one day give her mother some joy as a compensation for the sorrow she had now brought on her.

Pedro Ohlsen sat beside her when she sat down, and walked beside her when she walked, always endeavoring to keep out of her way, and in so doing getting continually in her way on the deck that was crowded with bales of goods. She saw nothing of his face except his large nose and his eyes, and these not very distinctly ; but he gave her the impression of being weighed down with something he wanted to say, but dared not. He sighed, he sat down, he got up, he walked round her, sat down again, but not a word could he command ; nor did she speak. Finally he was compelled to give it up, and dejectedly producing a huge leather pocket-book he whispered that in it she would find the one hundred dollars — and a little more. She held out her hand and thanked him, coming so close to his face in so doing that she saw his eyes, fixed on hers, glistening with tears. With her the last remaining spark of life was passing

away from his languishing existence. Gladly would he have told her something which might perchance call up some loving thought when he was no more ; but he was forbidden to do so, and although he would have spoken notwithstanding this, he could not muster the courage, nor did she give him any assistance. Petra was indeed too weary, and the thought that it was *he* who had caused her to commit that first sin against her mother would not just now leave her. His presence wore on her, and this grew worse instead of better the longer he sat there ; for when we are tired we are apt to be irritable. The poor man felt this ; he said he supposed he must go, and then finally he brought himself to whisper, "Farewell!" drawing one of his withered hands out of the mitten as he did so. She placed in it her warm hand ; they both rose.

"Thank you — and bear greetings from me!" said she.

He heaved a sigh, or rather made a gurgling sound, which was repeated several times, dropped her hand, turned, and quietly backed down the ship's ladder. She walked to the gunwale ; he looked up as she reached it, greeted her, took his place in the boat and rowed away. She stood watching him until he

became lost in the dark. When she went down to the cabin again she was so weary she could scarcely stand, and although she felt sick the moment she got down there, she had no sooner laid her head on the pillow and said the first two or three petitions of the Lord's Prayer than she fell asleep.

Meanwhile the mother was sitting up by the yellow boat-house; she had followed them slowly the whole distance, and had sat down there just as they had pushed from the shore. From the same spot Pedro Ohlsen, in days of yore, had gone out in the boat with her; it was a long, long time ago, but she remembered it well as he rowed away with her daughter.

As soon as she saw him coming back alone she rose and moved away; for now she knew that her daughter was safely on board the ship. She did not take the way home, but went farther onward; in the dark she found the path leading over the mountains, and this she took. Her house in town stood empty and shattered for more than a month; she felt that she could not return to it before she had received a cheering letter from her daughter.

But in the mean time there was an opportunity of testing the popular feeling toward her.

All low natures take passionate delight in uniting to persecute the stronger, but only as long as these offer resistance; when they see their victims calmly submitting to ill-treatment a sense of shame overcomes them, and they hiss at whoever would cast another stone. People had rejoiced at the thought of hearing Gunlang's powerful voice raging through Holloway Street; they had fancied her calling the sailors to her aid and challenging a street fight. When she still failed to appear on the third evening, the people were scarcely to be controlled; they wanted to go in after her; they wanted to cast the two women out in the street; pursue them out of the town; drive them away. The windows had not been repaired since the preceding night; accompanied by the hurrahs of the mob two men crept through them in order to open the door — and in stormed the riotous multitude! They searched through every room, upstairs and down; they burst the doors; they dashed to pieces everything that stood in their way; they hunted in every corner, even in the cellar at last, after mother and daughter; but not a living soul was to be found. For a moment all was still; those who were inside came out, one by one, and stole away behind the rest. In a very little while the yard in front of the house was deserted.

Soon there were those in the town who pronounced this conduct toward two defenseless women most unseemly.

The matter was talked over until all agreed that whatever the fisher maiden might have been guilty of, Gunlaug was not to blame for it, and therefore great injustice had been done her. She was sadly missed in the town; drunken brawls and riots began to be the order of the day; for the town had actually lost its police. Her commanding form in the doorway was missed by passers-by; the seamen in especial missed her. No house was like hers, they said, for there every one was dealt with according to his deserts; each had his proper place in her confidence, and her help, whatever might happen. Neither sailors nor skippers, neither employers nor housewives had realized her worth until now that she was gone.

And so a message of joy spread through the whole town when it became known that she had been seen in her house baking and cooking as before. Every one was compelled to go there for himself in order to be assured that the panes had been replaced, the door repaired, and that smoke was curling up from the chimney. Yes, the report was really true. Gunlaug had actually returned!

People crept up on the opposite side of Holloway Street that they might see better. There she sat in front of the bread griddle; she neither looked up nor out, her eye followed her hand and her hand was working; for she had come back to redeem her losses and first of all to pay from her earnings the one hundred dollars she owed Pedro Ohlsen. In the beginning people contented themselves with merely looking in on her; but for a long time evil consciences deterred them all from entering. Gradually, however, they came, — first the mothers of households, good, friendly souls; but they found no opportunity to talk with her of anything but business, for Gunlaug would listen to nothing else. Next came the fishermen, then the merchants and the skippers to hire people to work for them and to make inquiries in regard to the character of those seeking employment, and finally, on the first Sunday after her return, the sailors appeared. There must have been some agreement among them, because, as the evening wore on, the house became suddenly so crowded that not only were both the principal rooms overflowing, but the chairs and tables, which in the summer time stood in the garden, had to be brought out and set up in the passage, in the kitchen, and in the back cham

ber. No one, in casting an eye over this assemblage, could form the least idea of the feelings of these people who were sitting together ; for Gunlaug had resumed her silent sway the moment they had crossed her threshold, and the stern dignity with which she waited on each checked every effort at welcome, every question. She was the same as of old, except that her hair was no longer black and that her manner had become somewhat subdued. But when the sailors began to grow merry, they could no longer restrain themselves, and every time she and the servant girl went out Knud, the boat-swain, who had always been her favorite, was called on to drink her health when she came in again. But courage failed even him until his head was pretty well heated, and when finally she came to collect the empty flasks and glasses, he rose and said, "that it was a good thing she was back again. For it was most certainly true that — that it was a good thing she was back again."

This seemed to the others well spoken ; they, too, rose to their feet, and shouted, "Yes, it was a good thing !" and those in the passage and those in the kitchen and those in the next room sprang up also, and pressing forward echoed what had been said, while the boat-

swain, handing her a glass, cried, "Hurrah!" and then several cried, "Hurrah!" until it seemed as if the roof might be lifted and sent sailing upward to the skies.

By and by some one declared that shameful injustice had been done her; then another swore the same, and soon the whole house swore and protested that they had done her the most shameful injustice. When finally there came a lull, because a word from her was eagerly desired, Gunlaug said that they must all accept many thanks.

"But," added she, continuing to gather up the empty glasses and flasks, "as long as I have said nothing about the matter, it is unnecessary for you to bring it up."

She here left the room, as she had collected all she could carry, and presently returned for the rest. From this time forth her power was supreme.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the darkness of night the vessel cast anchor in the harbor of Bergen. Half bewildered from sea-sickness, Petra was taken in the captain's boat through a multiplicity of vessels, large and small, up to the throng of ferrymen on the wharves and of peasants and street-boys in the narrow by-ways through which their way led. They halted in front of a neat little cottage, where an old woman, at the captain's request, cordially received her. She craved food and sleep, and had both wants satisfied. She awoke at noon the next day, refreshed and bright, to new sounds and an unfamiliar accent, and when the curtains were up, to a new surrounding nature, to strange faces and a strange town. She herself had become a new person, she thought, as she paused before the glass — this face was not the old familiar one. She could not well define the difference, not understanding that at her age any great sorrow and shock refines and spiritualizes ; yet at sight of herself in the glass she was forced to recall the

past nights, and as she did she shuddered. So she hastened to get ready to go down-stairs to all the new surroundings that awaited her. She met her hostess and several ladies who first surveyed her from head to foot and then promised to interest themselves in her behalf; as a beginning they offered to show her round the city. She desired to make a number of purchases, and so she ran up-stairs again after her pocket-book; but it seemed so thick and clumsy that, feeling ashamed to carry it down-stairs with her, she opened it in her room to take out the money. Instead of one hundred dollars, she found three hundred. Thus Pedro Ohlsen had again given her money contrary to her mother's knowledge and consent. So little comprehension had she of its value, though, that the amount of the sum did not astonish her; and so it did not occur to her to reflect on the cause of his great liberality. Instead of a communication overflowing with joy and inquiries indicating a suspicion of the truth, Pedro Ohlsen received from Gunlaug a letter written to herself, in which her daughter with ill-concealed vexation betrayed her benefactor and asked what she was to do with this smuggled gift.

What first strongly impressed Petra was the natural scenery of the town. She could not

get clear of the feeling that the mountain was so near her that she must beware of it. A sense of oppression came over her whenever she raised her eyes, and at the same time she felt an impulse to stretch forth her hand and knock to gain admission. There were moments, on the contrary, when it seemed to her that she could find no possible outlet. Sun-forsaken and gloomy stood the mountain; dense clouds hung above it or were driven over it; there was an incessant alternation of wind and rain coming from the mountain and sent by the mountain upon the town. There was no gloom, however, over the people around her. Soon she felt happy among them, for in their bustling activity there was a freedom, an ease, a cheerfulness, she had never known, and which, after what she had experienced, affected her like a smile of welcome. When at dinner the next day she remarked that she liked best to be where there were many people, she was told that if that were the case she should go to the theatre, where, in a single building, she would find hundreds of people. She thought she would like that, so a ticket was bought, and at the appointed hour she was taken to the theatre, which was close by, and was shown to a seat in the front row in the balcony. She sat

in a dazzling blaze of light, among many hundred bright-faced people, and surrounded by gay colors and a buzz of voices that smote on her ear from every direction, rushing toward her like the roaring of the mighty ocean.

Petra had not the faintest conception of what she was to see here. She knew, indeed, nothing but what Ødegaard had taught her, and what she had learned from chance acquaintances. About the theatre, however, Ødegaard had never told her a word; the sailors had spoken of a theatre where there were wild beasts and equestrian performers, and it would never have occurred to the boys to speak of a play even if they had learned about it at school; the little town had no theatre, not even a house called by that name; traveling beast-tamers, rope-dancers, and clowns were in the habit of exhibiting either in some seaman's warehouse or in the open commons. She was so ignorant that she did not even know what to ask; she sat there in high spirits waiting for the appearance of curiosities, such as camels or monkeys. Filled with this idea she came gradually to see animals in every face about her, — horses, dogs, foxes, cats, mice, — and it amused her. Thus the orchestra assembled without her noticing it. She started up in alarm, for

with abrupt bewildering crash of kettle-drums, drums, bassoons, and horns, the overture began. In her whole life she had never heard more than a couple of violins, and perchance a flute, played at one time. The stormy grandeur of tone that now smote on her ear made her turn pale, so like it was to the cold, black billow that breaks on the sea. She sat lost in terror lest the next burst should be even more exciting; and yet she would have been loath to have the music cease. Soon gentler harmonies brought light, revealing vistas never dreamed of before, and toward these she was softly rocked by sweet melodies. Sportive life filled the air about her; a radiant throng was soaring upward with vigorous pinion strokes, and now it softly descended, majestically congregated together only to break apart in frolicsome gaiety, until the pall of darkness descended, and all seemed to be whirled away in the boom of a great cataract. Then, above the din and roar rose a single strain, as from a bird on a bough wet by the spray from the depths below. Sadly, timidly, the song began, but the atmosphere above was purified thereby, the sun peeped forth, and once more the long blue vistas were filled with those marvelous fluttering, floating visions she had seen before. This had

lasted but a brief period when, lo! it subsided into gentle peace, the exultant hosts passed farther and farther away, naught was visible save the sunbeams which were diffused through the air; above this infinite waste the sun alone held sway, calmly weaving its meshes of light over the scene, and amidst all this glory Petra sat dreaming. She involuntarily rose when the music ceased; for now the spell was broken. Ah, how wonderful! At that moment the beautiful painted curtain, right in front of her, went all the way up to the ceiling! She was in a church, a church with arches and pillars, a church filled with the swelling tones of an organ, and solemn grandeur, and people advanced toward her in costumes unknown to her, and they spoke, yes, they were talking in church, and in a language she did not understand. But how was this? They were talking behind her, too.

"Sit down!" said they; but there were no seats in the church, so of course the two people she saw there remained standing as well as she, and the longer she looked at them the clearer it became to her that these costumes were the same she had seen in a picture of Olaf the Saint—and there, they were actually mentioning St. Olaf's name.

"Sit down!" she again heard behind her;
"sit down!" exclaimed several voices.

"There is, perhaps, something to be seen back there, too," thought Petra, and turned quickly.

A multitude of angry faces, some actually threatening, met hers.

"There must be something amiss here," thought Petra, and she was about to leave, but an old lady who sat beside her gently pulled her dress.

"Why do you not sit down, then, child?" whispered she. "The people behind us cannot see."

In an instant Petra was in her seat. "Why, of course, it is the theatre in there, and we are looking on — yes, to be sure, it is the theatre!" and she kept repeating the word to impress it fully on her mind.

Once more she gazed into the church, but in spite of every effort she failed to understand him who was speaking there. Not until she had fully comprehended that he was a handsome young man did she here and there gather the import of his words, and when she found that he was speaking of love and was himself in love, she understood almost everything he said. Her attention was suddenly drawn from

him by the entrance of a third, whom she knew, from pictures she had seen, must be a monk, and she had longed very much to see a monk. How softly he stepped about, and how quiet he was! He seemed, indeed, to be a pious man, and he spoke so distinctly and slowly that Petra could follow every word. But suddenly he turns and says just the opposite of what he has been saying. Good heavens! this is a villain! Listen, he ~~is~~ is a villain! Even his face shows plainly that he is one! Why cannot that handsome young man discover it? He surely must have heard what he said!

"He is deceiving you!" she whispered, half aloud.

"Hush!" said the old lady.

Ah! the young man did not hear; in his perilous trust he leaves the church. They all withdraw, and presently an old man enters. Why, how is this? When the old man speaks, it seems as if the young man was speaking, and yet this surely is an old man. But look! look! A shining procession of white-clad maidens, walking two and two, are passing noiselessly and slowly through the church. Petra saw them long after they had gone, and before her mind's eye floated a similar memory

from her childhood. She had gone with her mother across the mountains one winter: as they waded along through the new-fallen snow, they inadvertently startled a brood of ptarmigans, who suddenly filled the air before them; they were white; white was the snow; the forest was white — for a long time afterward all her visions were white. So, too, it was now for a while.

But now one of these white-robed women advances, rosary in hand, and kneels; the old man, too, has knelt down, and she speaks to him. He bears her a message and a letter from foreign lands. He hands her the letter, and it is quite evident that it is from some one very dear to her. Ah, how delightful this is! They all love one another here! She opens it; why, it is no letter — it is full of music! But see, ah, see! he is himself the letter. The old man is the young one, and it is he whom she loves. They embrace. Good heavens! they kiss! Petra felt herself growing fiery red, and buried her face in her hands, while she listened further. Hark! he is telling her that they must marry immediately, and she pulls his beard, laughing, and saying he has become a barbarian, and he tells her how beautiful she has become. He gives her a ring, and he prom-

ises her robes of scarlet and velvet, golden shoes, and a girdle of gold; then merrily taking leave, he goes to the king to speak of the wedding. His bride gazes after him, with beaming face; but when she turns, the place seems empty without him.

Then swiftly the wall glides down again. Can it be over now? Why, it seemed to be only just beginning! Blushing deeply, Petra turned to the old lady and inquired, —

“Is it over?”

“No, no, child; this is only the first act. There are five such, yes, there are, indeed,” she repeated, with a sigh; “there are five of them.”

“About the same?” asked Petra.

“What you mean by that?”

“Do the same people come back again, and does it all go on?”

“Have you never seen a play before?”

“No.”

“Ah, to be sure, I suppose there are many places where there is no theatre; it is so expensive.”

“But what is it all?” asked Petra, staring with anxious eagerness, as if she could not wait for an answer. “Who are these people?”

“This is a company belonging to Manager Naso, a first-class company; he is so clever.”

"Is it he who makes it all up? Or, what is it? For pity's sake, answer me!"

"Dear child, do you not know what a play is? Where do you come from?"

But when Petra thought of her birthplace, she recalled also her shame and her flight, and she relapsed into silence, not daring to ask any more questions.

The second act came, and with it the king. Yes, truly this was the king; her eyes really beheld a monarch! She heard not what he said, she saw not with whom he spoke; she only looked at his kingly attire, his kingly demeanor, his kingly gestures. She was first roused from her absorption when the young man entered; and then they all started off after the bride. Now she was forced to wait again.

During the interlude the old lady leaned over to her. "Do you not think the acting very fine?" said she.

"Acting — what do you mean by that?" and Petra looked at her in surprise.

She did not notice that every one round about was staring at her, and that the old lady was urged on by the others to question her; she did not hear that they were all laughing at her.

"They do not speak as we do!" said she, receiving no answer.

"Why, they are Danes," replied the old lady, also beginning to laugh.

Then it dawned on Petra that the good lady was laughing at her many queries; and she said no more, but sat with her eyes fixed intently on the curtain.

When it rose again, she had the great delight of seeing an archbishop. It was as before; she became so lost in the sight of him that she heard not a word that he uttered. Then the sound of music reached her, — ah, so hushed, so far distant! but it came nearer and nearer; it was a chorus of women's voices, accompanied by flutes and violins and an instrument that was not a guitar, and yet like many guitars, only softer, richer, more vibrating in tone. The harmony of the whole streamed toward her in long waves of sound, and when it all had become transformed into undulating colors, the procession swept in; soldiers with halberds, choristers with censers, monks bearing tapers, a crowned king, and at his side the bridegroom, clad in white. Then came once more the white-robed women, strewing roses and music before the bride, who was attired in white silk and wore a red wreath in her hair.

At her side walked a tall, stately woman, in a purple robe with a long train, dotted with crowns of gold, and with a small glittering crown on her head. This must be the queen ! The whole church was flooded with music and rich coloring, and everything which now took place from the moment the bridegroom led the bride to the altar where they knelt, while their followers knelt about them, until the archbishop came up with his train of crusaders, was but as new links in the many-hued chain of tones.

But now, just as the ceremony was about to begin, the archbishop held aloft his crosier and forbade it: their marriage was contrary to the laws of God ; never in this life could they be united ! O Heavenly Father, have mercy ! The bride swooned away, and Petra, too, who had risen to her feet, fell with a piercing shriek.

" Water ! Bring water here ! " voices about her cried.

" No," said the old lady, in reply. " She has not fainted ; it is not necessary."

" It is not necessary," was echoed around. " Silence."

" Silence ! " was shouted from the parquet. " Silence in the balcony ! "

" Hush ! " was answered from the balcony.

"You must not take it so to heart; it is all romance and nonsense," whispered the old lady; "but Madam Naso plays astonishingly well."

"Be still!" now Petra, too, called out; she was already absorbed in the play, for now the fiendish monk appeared with a sword. The two lovers were made to take a piece of cloth and he cut it asunder between them with his sword, as the church severs, as pain severs, and as the sword above the gates of Paradise severed from bliss on that day when Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden. Weeping women took from the bride her red wreath, and gave her in its place a white one; with it she was pledged to the cloister for life. He, to whom she belonged beyond time and eternity, should know that she lived, but might not claim her; know her to be buried within those convent walls, yet never see her. How heart-rending the farewell they bade each other! There could be no greater grief on earth than theirs!

"Good gracious!" whispered the old lady, as the curtain fell; "do not be so foolish, I beg of you. It is only Madam Naso, the manager's wife."

Petra opened wide her eyes and stared at

the good lady. She thought she must be mad, and as the lady had long held the same opinion of Petra, they kept on glancing shyly at each other from time to time, but interchanged no further remarks.

When the curtain rose once more, Petra could no longer follow what was taking place on the stage; she had eyes for nothing save the bride behind the cloister walls and the bridegroom watching by day and by night without, both in dire despair. She endured their agony; she prayed their prayers; all that was actually on the stage passed colorless before her. An ominous silence recalled her; the empty church kept growing ever larger; no sound was heard within save the twelve strokes of the midnight hour. Beneath the vaulted roof is heard a rumbling peal, the walls tremble, St. Olaf has arisen from his tomb, his winding-sheet about him. Tall and terrible, he strides onward; guards flee before him; thunder rolls; and the monk falls, pierced by the mighty spear, whereupon darkness closes around, and the apparition sinks away. The monk is left lying there like a heap of ashes struck by lightning.

Petra had unconsciously clung to the old lady, who had been rather alarmed by her con-

vulsive grasp, but now seeing her growing paler hastened to say, —

“Bless you, child! this is merely Knutsen. This is the only part he can act because his voice is so thick.”

“No, no, no, no! I saw the flames about him,” said Petra, “and the church trembled beneath his tread!”

“Do be quiet there!” is cried from several quarters. “Out with whoever it is that cannot keep quiet!”

“Silence in the balcony!” comes from the parquet.

“Be still!” answers the balcony.

Petra had cowered down as if to shield herself from observation, but immediately forgot what had been going on, for lo! there are the lovers again; the lightning has burst open a way for them; they are seeking escape. They have found each other, — they fall into each other's arms. God in heaven, protect them now!

Then there arises a clamor of shouts, mingled with the sound of trumpets. The bridegroom is torn from his bride's side and is made to join the hosts battling for the fatherland. He is wounded, and with his dying breath sends his last greetings to his bride. Petra

does not comprehend what has happened until the bride quietly enters and sees his corpse! Then it seems as if every cloud of sorrow had gathered over this one spot; but a glance disperses them. From the bosom of the dead the bride looks up and prays that she, too, may die. The heavens are opened to that gaze; a wondrous light streams down; the bridal chamber is above; let the bride enter. Ah! she can already look in, for in her eyes there sparkles a peace like that on yonder lofty mountains. Then the eyelids droop, the struggle has ended in victory, the fidelity of the lovers has won an exalted crown. She has joined her lover now.

Petra long sat silent; her heart was uplifted in faith, her whole being filled with the strength and greatness she had witnessed. She rose superior to all that was groveling; she rose above fear and pain; she rose with a smile for every one, and in them all she saw her brothers and sisters. The evil which divides man existed no longer—it lay crushed beneath the thunder. People returned her smile; she was the person who had been half beside herself during the play; but she saw in their smiles only the reflection of the victory she bore within herself. In the belief that their smiles were in harmony with her own, she smiled

back so radiantly that they smiled in response to her smile. She passed down the broad stairway, between the two receding columns, from which was reflected joy in response to her joy, and beauty in response to the beauty which radiated from her. There are times when the beams of light in our own souls become so brilliant that they make everything about us bright though we ourselves be unconscious of it. This is earth's grandest triumphal procession—to be announced, borne onward, and followed by one's own glowing thoughts.

When Petra, not knowing how she came there, reached home, she inquired what it was she had seen. There were several persons present who were able to understand her and give her a helpful answer. And after it had been fully explained to her what a drama was, and what great actors had in their power to do, she started up and said, —

“This is the noblest calling on earth ; this is what I mean to be.”

To the astonishment of every one she put on her things and went out again. She felt that she must be alone in the open air. She walked out of town, and, though the wind blew high, passed on to a point near by that jutted out into the sea. The turbulent waves were dashing

against the rocks below ; but on both sides of the bay the town lay overspread with a luminous haze, through which countless numbers of scattered beams of light were working their way, and could but shed radiance over the veil they could not raise. She made this an emblem of her soul. The hollow sound in the mighty darkness beneath her feet was a warning from unfathomable depths. Either she must sink into the dread abyss, or she must enter the ranks of those who are striving to give light. She asked herself why she had never had such thoughts before, and replied that it was because she had been ruled by the power of the moment, but then she also felt that at such times she had power indeed. She saw it now : just as many moments would be granted her as there were twinkling lights yonder, and she prayed God to be able to make them all full that He might not have kindled them in vain. An icy wind blew about her, and she rose. She had not been gone long, but when she bent her steps homeward once more she knew whither her path must henceforth lead.

The next day she stood before the manager's door. Loud, angry voices reached her from within ; one of them, she thought, was like that

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The next day she stood before the manager's door. Loud, angry voices reached her from within ; one of them, she thought, was like that

of the bride of yesterday. It was pitched in a different key, it was true, but it made Petra quiver. She waited for some time, but as it seemed as though there would be no end to the bickering, she knocked.

"Come in!" cried a man's voice, in a very angry tone.

"Oh!" screamed a female voice, and as Petra opened the door, she saw a picture of flying terror, with streaming hair and night-dress, vanish through a side door.

The manager, a tall man, with savage eyes which he hastened to cover with a pair of gold spectacles, was pacing the floor in a state of wild tumult. His long nose so completely dominated his face that all the other features seemed to be there for its sake alone. His eyes peered out like a brace of gun barrels behind this bulwark; the mouth was a ditch in front of it, and the forehead a light bridge thrown across from it to the forest or the "barricades."

"What do you want?" he snarled, suddenly coming to a halt in front of Petra. "Are you the person who wants to become a chorus-singer?"

"Chorus-singer? What is that?"

"Well, then you do not know, *aha!* What do you want, then?"

"I want to be an actress."

"So that is what you want—indeed; and you do not so much as know what a chorus-singer is. But do you not speak a dialect?"

"Dialect? What is that?"

"Well, upon my word! You do not know what that is either, and yet you want to be an actress. Ah, indeed!—yes, that is just like those Norwegians. Dialect means that you do not talk as we do."

"Yes, but I have been practicing the whole morning."

"Have you, indeed? Well—well! Let me hear!"

And Petra struck an attitude and said, with the same accent as the bride of yesterday,—

"I greet you, my love, good morning!"

"I think!—the deuce take you!—that you must have come here to ridicule my wife!"

A peal of laughter was heard from the adjoining room, and the manager, without in the least appearing to remember the mortal quarrel of a moment since, opened the door and called in:—

"Here is a Norwegian hussy who wants to caricature you. Do come out and see."

A lady, with disheveled, obstinate black hair, dark eyes, and large mouth, actually thrust her

head into the room and laughed. But Petra hastened toward her, for this must be the bride — no, her mother, she thought, as she came nearer. With her eyes fixed on the lady, she said, —

“I am not sure whether it is you — or is it your mother?”

Now the manager laughed; the lady had drawn back her head, and she continued to laugh in the side room. Petra’s embarrassment was so vividly depicted in her face, her attitude, the play of her features, that the manager became attentive. After watching her for a while, he picked up a book, and, as if nothing in the world had occurred, said, —

“Take this and read, my girl; but read as you yourself speak.”

She did so at once.

“No, no, that is not right. Listen to me!” He read to her, and she repeated what he had read, imitating to perfection.

“No, no, that is wrong; read Norwegian — the deuce! Norwegian.”

And Petra again read as before.

“No, I tell you, that is entirely wrong. Do not you understand what I mean? Are you stupid?”

He tried again and again, and gave her another book.

"See, this is in the opposite style; it is comic. Read this."

Petra read, but the same confusion followed until he grew disgusted, and shouted, —

"No, no, no! Why the devil do you not stop? What do you want on the stage? What the deuce is it you want to play?"

"I want to play what I saw yesterday."

"Aha! Of course you do! Well, — and then?"

"Why," said she, growing rather embarrassed, "it seemed to me splendid yesterday, but to-day I have been thinking it over, and I feel sure it would be better still if it had a good ending. That is the way I would like to play it."

"Would you, indeed? Ah, well! There is really nothing to prevent. The author is dead, he can make no further corrections, and you who can neither speak nor read want to remodel his play for him. Well, that is truly Norwegian!"

Petra did not comprehend a word; she only understood that it was against her, and she began to feel uneasy.

"May I not?" asked she, softly

"Why, good gracious. there is nothing to prevent. Pray begin! Listen," said he, in

an entirely different tone, and walking straight up to her: "You have no more idea of acting than a cat. And you have no talent either for comedy or tragedy; I have now tried you in both. Because you have a pretty face and a pretty figure, people have persuaded you that you can play better than my wife, to be sure, and so you want to come out in the finest *rôle* in our repertoire and alter it in the bargain. Well, that is the way with the Norwegians! they are people who are ready for everything!"

Petra's breath grew shorter and more labored, and there was evidently a struggle going on within. At length she ventured to whisper, —

"Do you really say that I may not?"

He had been standing looking out of the window, feeling quite sure that she had gone. Much astonished, he now turns, but observing her strongly-depicted emotion, and the vigor indicated by her whole demeanor, he pauses a moment, suddenly seizes a book, and, handing it to her, says, in a voice and with an expression of countenance from which every trace of his former manner had been effaced, —

"Here, read this piece, and read it slowly just that I may hear your voice. Well, — go on!"

But she could not read; she could not so much as see the letters.

"Come, do not be embarrassed!"

She began at last, but her reading was cold, colorless. He begged her to read the passage again, and "with more feeling." That made it still worse. At this he took the book from her, saying calmly, —

"I have now tried you in every possible way, so I cannot be blamed. I do assure you, my dear young lady, if I should send my boot on the stage or send you, it would make precisely the same impression, and a most singular one it would be. And now this is enough!"

But as a final effort Petra ventured to say, in tones of entreaty, —

"I really think I would understand if I might only" —

"Yes, no doubt, — every fishing hamlet understands the matter far better than we. The Norwegian public is the most enlightened in the world. Come, now, if you will not go, I will!"

She turned to the door, and burst into tears.

"See here!" said he — for this violent emotion had kindled a light within him. "Is it possible that it was you who made so much excitement in the theatre yesterday?"

She grew fiery red, and stood looking helplessly at him.

"Yes, of course it was you. I know you now — 'the fisher maiden.' After the play I was in company with a gentleman from your native place; he 'knew you well.' And so this is why you want to go on the stage: you want to practice your arts there. That is it! Hark, my theatre is a respectable place, and I decline every attempt to make it otherwise. Go! Will you go, I say?"

And Petra passed out the door, went sobbing down the stairs, and out of the house. She ran weeping through the crowded streets; and a young woman running weeping thus in broad daylight through the streets of a city could not but create a sensation. People stood still while small boys started in pursuit, and their numbers kept increasing. In the clatter behind her Petra heard the rumbling sounds of that night in her loft chamber, she recalled the faces in the air and sped swiftly onward. But recollection grew with every step, and so did the noise behind her, and when she had reached the house and torn open the street door, gained her own room, and locked herself in, she had to fling herself in a corner and ward off the faces that assailed her; she drove

them away with her hands, with menacing gestures, then sank exhausted and wept more softly — and was saved.

That same afternoon, toward evening, she left Bergen, and started inland. Whither she was bound she knew not herself; she only wanted to go where she was not known. She rode in a cariole, with her trunk strapped on behind and a post-boy sitting on it. The rain was pouring down in torrents, and she sat crouching beneath a huge umbrella, gazing timidly up at the mountain and then down at the precipice at her side. A brooding mass of fog hung over the forest in front of her, filled with spectres; in the next moment she would be there; but the nearer she drew the more the fog receded. A mighty roaring, growing ever stronger, increased the feeling that she was journeying onward through a mysterious region, where everything had its own significance, its own obscure connection, and where mortal was but a timid wayfarer who had to be ever on his guard if he wished to make progress. The roar came from many forces swollen by the rain until they had become giants, and now plunged madly from precipice to precipice with a thundering crash. The

road led over narrow bridges, and Petra could see the seething and foaming of the waters in the depths below. Anon it wound and curved down the mountains, here and there bringing to view some solitary cultivated spot, dotted with turf-thatched cottages, then leading upward again toward the forest and the boom of the falling waters. Her clothes were wet through and she was cold ; but she was resolved to pursue her way onward as long as daylight lasted, onward the next day, too, ever farther inland until she reached a spot where she dared feel secure. Thither would the Almighty help her, He who was guiding her now through darkness and tempest.

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CHAPTER VIII.

IN those sheltered, fertile valleys, scattered through the mountains in the diocese of Bergen, a mild autumn sometimes has summer-like days even late in the season. Then the cattle are driven out to pasture a while at noon, even after they have already been taken in to winter fodder; thus they become fat and frolicsome, and present a lively scene when they are brought home again in the afternoon.

And so it chanced that the cattle were coming down the mountain-path, cows, sheep, and goats, lowing, bleating, skipping to the tinkling of bells and turning into a large yard, just as Petra drove by. The weather was fine; every pane of the long white wooden building glittered in the sunshine, and above the house loomed the mountain, so densely covered with fir, birch, bird-cherry, and ash, and on the crags with dog-rose, that the houses could not help gaining warmth therefrom. In front of the main building, on the side nearest the road, there was a garden full of apple and red and

black cherry trees, with long paths and hedges of currant, gooseberry, and black currant bushes; but high above them all some venerable ash trees reared their broad crowns. The house looked like a nest hidden away among the foliage, and accessible to the sun alone. But it was just this appearance of concealment that aroused a longing within Petra, and the sun glittering on the window-panes and the alluring tinkle of the merry bells strengthened it, and when she heard that this was a parsonage, she hastily seized the reins. "Ah, I must enter here!" cried she, and turning, drove in past the garden.

A couple of Lapland dogs rushed savagely at her as she drove into the farm-yard, which was a large square surrounded by buildings, with the stable directly opposite the main building; another wing of the latter to the right, and the brew-house and servants' hall to the left. The farm-yard was now filled with cattle, and in their midst stood a lady, rather "tall and of graceful, refined form. She wore a close-fitting dress and had a kerchief tied about her head; round about her, and close up to her, were the goats, white, black, brown, and speckled ones, all wearing little bells that were tuned in thirds. She had a name for each goat and

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something good in a dish which the dairy-maid constantly replenished.

On the low steps leading from the main building to the court stood the priest, with a dish of salt in his hand, and in front of him stood the cows, licking salt from his hand and from the flag-stone on which he strewed it. The priest was not a tall man, but was solid-looking, with a short neck and a narrow forehead; his bushy brows overhung a pair of eyes which seemed averse to looking straight before them, but from which now and then shot radiant sidelong glances. His closely-cropped, thick hair was gray and bristled out in every direction; there was almost as heavy a growth on his neck as on his head; he wore no neck-tie, only a shirt-stud; the shirt was open in front, exposing the hairy breast; nor was it buttoned at the wrists, and the wristbands fell over the small, strong, begrimed hands that were dealing salt. Both hands and arms were overgrown with hair. He cast a sharp side-glance at the young stranger, who had alighted and threaded her way in among the goats, until she stood beside his daughter. What the two were talking about he could not possibly hear for the cattle, the dogs, and the bells; but now both ladies turned their eyes toward him and sur-

rounded by goats approached the steps. At a sign from the priest a herd-boy drove back the cows. Signe, the priest's daughter, called, and Petra was forced to notice her melodious voice —

“Father, here is a lady on a journey who would like to rest with us for a day.”

“She is welcome!” was the priest's reply, and handing the dish to one of the boys, he entered his study to the right, most likely to attend to his toilet. Petra followed the young lady of the house into the passage, which, properly speaking, should be termed a hall, it was so light and broad; she settled with the post-boy, her luggage was carried into the house, and she herself went into a side-room, opposite the study to make some changes in her dress, and then returned to the hall to be ushered into the family sitting-room.

What a large, bright room! The wall toward the garden was nearly all windows, and the middle one of these served also as a door to the garden. The windows were broad and high, and extended almost to the floor, and they were filled with flowers. The floor in front of the windows was covered with flower-pots; there were flowers, too, on the window-sills, and, in the place of curtains, ivies, grow-

ing out of two small flower baskets on either side of the window, were gracefully festooned. And there were shrubs and flowers out of doors, in the garden below, near the house, creeping over the walls, and finally on the ground round about; it seemed like entering a hot-house built in the centre of a garden. And yet it was scarcely possible to remain a moment in this room before the flowers ceased to attract the attention; it was the solitary church, standing on an eminence to the right, that was now seen, and the blue waters that reflected its image and then flowed glittering onward far away among the mountains, so far that it was impossible to decide whether it was a lake or an arm of the sea. And then these mountains themselves! Not solitary peaks, but chains of mountains, one mighty ridge perpetually rising behind the other as though here were the limits of human habitations.

When Petra withdrew her eyes the whole room seemed consecrated by the view without; everything was pure and light, and served as a flower frame-work to that grand picture. She felt as if encompassed by some unseen power that heeded her actions, aye, even her thoughts; she walked about involuntary examining her surroundings and touching the various objects

in the room. Above the sofa, on the long wall facing the light, she then saw a life-sized portrait of a lady who was smiling down at her. She sat with her head slightly inclined to one side and with her hands clasped; her right arm was resting on a book that bore the inscription "Sabbath Book." Her light hair, her transparent complexion, seemed to invest with Sabbath-like repose all that she beamed upon. Her smile was earnest; but the earnestness was that of resignation. She seemed to have the power of making every one love her; and she seemed to have comprehension for all, because she saw in everything the good alone. Her face bore traces of feeble health, but this weakness might have been her strength; for surely there could have existed no one who would have been willing to take advantage of it. A wreath of immortelles hung over the frame,—she was dead.

"That is my mother's picture," Petra heard in gentle tones behind her, and turning, she saw the daughter, who had left the room and had now returned.

Henceforth the portrait filled the whole room: everything led up to it; everything was invested with its light; everything else was arranged with reference to it; and the daughter

was its peaceful reflection. Rather more silent, rather more reserved seemed the daughter. The mother's eyes met every gaze with a full, clear light; the daughter's drooped, yet they had the same brightness and gentleness. She had her mother's build, yet no indication of delicate health; on the contrary, the bright colors of her close-fitting dress, her apron, and her little neckerchief, that was fastened with a Roman pin, invested her face with a glow of freshness, and evinced a grace and a love of beauty that made her worthy to be the daughter of her in the portrait and the guardian spirit of this home. As she moved about among her mother's flowers, Petra's heart yearned toward her. In the society of this young girl and in this home all the good within her must find growth. Ah, if she could only abide within these blessed precincts! Doubly desolate did she feel as her eyes now intently followed Signe, who glided softly through the room, pausing here and there. Signe felt this, and tried to avoid her gaze; but in vain, and so she became embarrassed, and bowed over the flowers. At length Petra realized her rudeness, and, much ashamed, wished to apologize, but there was something in this carefully-arranged hair, this delicate brow, this neatly-

fitting dress that bade her beware. She looked up at the portrait. She could have thrown herself into that mother's arms without hesitation. Did it not seem as though she had a welcome for her? Dared she believe it? Yes, indeed, for thus no one had ever looked at her before. That look showed that she knew everything that had befallen the wayfarer and would yet forgive her. Petra was sadly in need of forbearance, and she found it impossible to turn away from these benevolent eyes; she held her head on one side, as the figure in the portrait did; she clasped her hands as those hands were clasped, and looked around almost unconsciously.

"Please let me stay here!" exclaimed she.

Signe rose and turned toward her, too much amazed to reply.

"Please let me stay here!" begged Petra, once more taking a step towards Signe. "It is so delightful here!" she added, and her eyes filled with tears.

"I will ask father to come in," said the young lady.

Petra followed her with her eyes until she had entered the study; but no sooner was she alone than she became frightened at what she had done, and trembled when she saw the

priest's astonished face in the door. He came rather better dressed than when she had last seen him, and he had his pipe in his mouth. He held it with a firm grip, letting the mouth-piece slip from his lips with every whiff he drew and puffing the smoke out again in three columns, each time with a little smack; this he did several times, standing right in front of Petra, in the middle of the floor, without really looking at her, but as though waiting for her to speak. She dared not repeat her entreaty before this man, he looked so stern.

"You want to remain here?" he asked, bestowing on her a short, bright side-glance.

Alarm made her voice quiver.

"I have no place where I can go."

"Where do you come from?"

In a low tone Petra mentioned her native town and her own name.

"What brought you here?"

"I do not know — I am seeking — I wish to pay — I — Ah, I do not know," and she turned away, unable for a moment to utter another word, but summoning courage, she said: —

"I will do all you ask of me, if I may only stay here and not have to travel farther — and not have to entreat you any more."

The daughter had come into the room with

her father, but had stopped by the stove, where she stood, with downcast eyes, toying with the rose-leaves lying there to dry. The priest did not reply, the puffing from his pipe was the only sound to be heard, while he gazed alternately at Petra, his daughter, and the portrait. Now, the same object may produce totally different impressions: for while Petra prayed that the portrait might inspire him with forbearance, it seemed to him that it whispered, "Guard our child! Do not give her the companionship of one who is unknown to you!"

"No—you cannot stay," said he, turning with a sharp side-look to Petra.

Petra grew pale, heaved a deep, passionate sigh, gazed wildly about her, and rushed into a side-room, whose door stood half open, flung herself down by a table, and, burying her face, wholly gave way to her grief and disappointment.

Father and daughter exchanged glances. This total lack of good breeding shown in bursting without a word into another room and there seating herself alone, had only its counterpart in the strange conduct of coming in from the highway, begging to be allowed to remain, and wailing aloud when not permitted to do so. The priest crossed the floor after

her, not to speak to her, but, on the contrary, to close the door behind her. He came back, his face flushed, and said, in a low tone, to his daughter, who still stood by the stove:—

“Did you ever see the like of that woman? Who is she? What does she want?”

The daughter did not reply immediately; but when she did, she spoke in a still softer tone than her father.

“She acts strangely, but there is something remarkable about her.”

The priest was pacing the floor, and kept watching the door; finally he paused, and whispered, —

“Do you think her mind is sound?” and as Signe did not answer, he came nearer, repeating more decidedly, “She is mad, Signe, half-witted: that is what is remarkable about her.”

He resumed his walk; other thoughts began to work in his mind, he had almost forgotten what he had last said, when his daughter at length whispered, —

“I cannot think so; but she is certainly very unhappy.”

With this she bowed over the dried rose-leaves she was still fingering. There was nothing in the ring of her voice nor in her movements that would have attracted the attention

of another, but her father's manner changed at once ; he walked up and down several times, his eyes fixed on the portrait, and finally said, but very softly, —

“ Do you think that, because she looks unhappy — mother would have asked her to stay ? ”

“ Mother would have given no answer for several days,” whispered the daughter, bowing still lower over the rose-leaves.

The slightest remembrance of her in the portrait, when brought forward thus by the daughter, could make that hairy lion's head as meek as a lamb's. He felt at once the truth of what Signe said ; he stood like a school-boy who has been caught in deception ; he forgot to smoke or to walk, and after a long while he whispered, —

“ Ought I to ask her to remain a few days ? ”

“ Why, you have given her your answer.”

“ Yes, but it is one thing to give her a home, another to let her stay a few days.”

Signe seemed to reflect a while, and said finally, —

“ You must do as seems best to you.”

The priest felt inclined to consider the proposal somewhat more closely, so he walked to and fro, smoking vigorously. Pausing, finally he said, —

“Will you go in, or shall I?”

“It would certainly do more good if you were to speak to her,” said the daughter, looking up, lovingly.

He was just about taking hold of the door-knob, when a burst of laughter rang out from the next room, — then all was still, and then came another loud peal. The priest, who had started back, hurried forward again, his daughter following him, for they were both sure that the stranger must have suddenly become ill.

On opening the door they beheld Petra sitting where she had first dropped down, and in front of her lay an open book, over which she had cast herself without being aware of it. Her tears had rolled down on its leaves, and seeing this she had made an effort to remove their traces, when she was attracted by one of those coarse expressions, which she well remembered from her street life, but which she could never have believed any book would venture to reproduce. Thoroughly aghast she forgot to weep, and sat staring at the book. What madness in the world could this be! She read with mouth wide open; it grew worse and worse, so coarse, but so irresistibly ludicrous that she could not possibly help reading on. She read until she had lost consciousness

of everything about her; she read herself away from care and sorrow, from time and place, with old Father Holberg, for it was he! She laughed, she roared with laughter, even now that the priest and his daughter were standing over her, she did not see their earnestness, did not remember her errand, but laughing, asked, —

“What is this? What in all the world is this?” and she herself turned to the title-page.

Then the color forsook her face; she looked up at them, then down again into the book at those familiar strokes. There are some things that strike the heart with the force of a bullet, things we think we have fled a hundred miles away from, but which unexpectedly rise up and confront us. Here on the first page was written, “Hans Ødegaard.” Her face became suffused with hot blushes. Petra sprang up, crying, —

“Is this book his? Is he coming here?”

“He has promised to do so,” replied Signe.

And now Petra remembered that there was a priest’s family in the diocese of Bergen, whom Ødegaard had met when traveling abroad. She had only been moving round in a circle; she had fled straight towards him.

“Is he likely to come soon? Is he perhaps

here already?" She seemed ready to renew her flight immediately.

"No, indeed, he is ill," said Signe.

"Ah, that is true, he is ill," repeated Petra, in a tone of anguish.

"But tell me," burst out Signe, "you surely cannot be" —

"The fisher maiden?" completed the priest.

"Yes, I am the fisher maiden," said Petra, bestowing on him a look of entreaty.

They knew her well here, for Ödegaard had talked of nothing else.

"This alters the case," said the priest, who perceived that here there was something broken, something that needed the aid of friends. "You may remain for the present," he added.

Petra raised her eyes, and as she did so, she saw the look of thanks his daughter bestowed on him. This did her so much good that she walked right up to Signe, took both her hands, — more she dare not do, — and said, very bashfully, though, —

"I will tell you all as soon as we two are alone."

An hour later Signe knew Petra's whole history and immediately imparted it to her father. According to his advice Signe wrote the same day to Ödegaard, and continued to do so as long as Petra remained in the house.

But when Petra lay down to rest that evening on the large feather bed in the cosy chamber, with crackling birch-wood in the stove, and the New Testament between the two candles on the snowy-white dressing-table, she gave thanks to her God, as she grasped the Book, for all He had given her, the evil as well as the good.

The priest, as a young man with ardent nature and native powers of eloquence, had wished to study theology. His wealthy parents had opposed him in this; they preferred to see him choose what they called an independent calling; but their opposition only increased his zeal, and when he had taken his degree he went abroad to continue his studies. During a preliminary sojourn in Denmark he frequently met a lady who belonged to a sect which did not seem to him rigorous enough in its views, and to which he was consequently averse. He was continually desiring to influence her; but the manner in which she looked at him and thereby silenced him, whenever he attempted to do so, he could never forget during the whole time he remained abroad. When he returned to Denmark he sought her at once. They passed much time together

and grew in each other's favor, until they became engaged and were shortly after married. Now, however, it proved that each had cherished a secret thought: he had proposed to draw her womanly grace over to his gloomy doctrines; while she had felt a child-like confidence that she could enlist all his power and eloquence in the service of her religion. His first faint effort was met by *her* equally feeble one; he drew back disappointed, suspicious. She was not slow to perceive this, and thenceforth he was perpetually on his guard against her efforts, she on her guard against his. Neither of them, however, ever made another attempt; for they had both become alarmed. He was afraid of his own passionate nature, and she feared that an unsuccessful attempt might ruin her chances of winning him, for she never relinquished her hope; this had become her life task. But there never was any contest; for where she was no strife was possible. His active will, his suppressed passion, must have an outlet, and this they found each time he ascended the pulpit and saw her sitting below. Irresistibly he drew the congregation into the vortex with him; he created a general agitation, and was excited thereby in return. Seeing this her troubled heart found solace in be-

nevolence, and by and by, when she became a mother, she took her daughter in bodily and spiritual embrace and made the child share her own hours of solitude. There she gave, there she received, there she cradled, her own cherished views in her child's innocent heart ; there she held a love feast, and from it she came back to him, that stern man, with the combined gentleness of the woman and the Christian. At such times it was impossible for him to say anything that was not kind. He could not help loving her beyond all else on earth ; but all the more sorrowful did this make him, all the more did his heart bleed that he could not help her to work out her salvation. With a mother's quietly asserted right she removed her child, too, from his religious instructions. Soon the child's songs, the child's questions, were a new source of pain to him ; and when in the pulpit he became wrought up to harshness through his violent emotions, his wife only met him with increased mildness when they set out together for home ; her eyes spoke, but her lips uttered not a word. And the little daughter clung to his hand and looked up at him with eyes that were her mother's.

Every subject was discussed in their home except the one which was the root of all their

thoughts. But such an exhausting strain could not last any great length of time. She continued to smile, but only because she dared not weep. When the time approached for the daughter to prepare for confirmation, and he by virtue of his office could draw her as quietly over to his instruction as the mother had hitherto held her under hers, the tension reached its climax, and after the sermon, when the names of the candidates for confirmation were announced, the mother fell ill, in about the same way that people usually become weary. She said, smilingly, that now she could not walk any more, and a few days later, quite as smilingly, that now she could not sit up any longer either. She wanted her daughter with her all the time, for, although she could not talk with her, she could look at her. And the daughter, knowing what her mother liked best, read to her from the Book of Life and sang to her the hymns she had taught her in childhood, those new, cheerful hymns of the religious society to which the mother belonged. The priest for a long time failed to comprehend what was in store for him; but *when* he understood it all else vanished, he could think of but one thing, and that was to have her say something to him, just a few words. This, however, she

was unable to do; she could no longer speak. He stood at the foot of the bed, gazing at her and entreating her; she smiled at him until he fell on his knees, and grasping the daughter's hand, placed it in the mother's, as though he would say, "Here, keep her—she shall be yours forever!" Then the mother smiled, as she had never smiled before, and with the smile still on her lips she passed away from him.

For a long time after this no one could gain access to the priest; another was appointed to assume the charge of his parish; he himself went wandering about from room to room, from spot to spot, as though seeking something. He stepped softly; when he spoke it was in a subdued tone, and only by falling wholly into his hushed ways could his daughter gradually succeed in entering into fellowship with him. Now she aided him in his search; the mother's words were all called up; her wishes became the law according to which they proceeded. The daughter's intercourse with her, from which he had been shut out, he now for the first time entered into. From the first moment the child could recollect, everything was lived through anew; the mother's hymns were sung, her

prayers were prayed, the sermons she had been fondest of were read one by one, and her interpretations, her remarks, faithfully recalled. Thus roused to activity, the priest soon felt a desire to visit the spot where he had found her, in order that he might in the same way follow in her footsteps. They went, and he regained his health by thoroughly making her life his own. A beginner himself, he keenly appreciated all beginnings about him, the great national ones, the lesser political ones; and this restored to him his youth. His powers streamed back upon him, his yearnings at the same time — now he wanted to proclaim the Word so that it might be a preparation for life as well as for death!

Before again shutting himself up in his mountain parish with his beloved work, he felt an impulse to take a wider view of the outside world. So he and his daughter extended their travels, and now their lives were filled with the grandest remembrances.

Among these people Petra lived.

CHAPTER IX.

IN the third year of her sojourn here, one Friday, a few days before Christmas, the two girls were sitting together in the dusk of the evening; the priest had just come in with his pipe. The day had been passed as most others during these two years; it had begun with a walk, and after breakfast an hour had been spent in playing and singing, next came language lessons or other studies, and then a little time devoted to household matters. In the afternoon they retired to their own rooms, and to-day Signe had been writing to Ödegaard, after whom Petra never inquired; indeed, she never could bear any reference to the past. Toward evening they had gone coasting, and had now met to talk and sing, or later, to read aloud. It was at such times the priest always joined them. He was a remarkably fine reader, and so was his daughter. Petra learned the style of both, but especially their language. Signe's pronunciation and the inflections of her voice had a great charm for Petra, and the mu

sical tones kept ringing in her ear when she was alone. Altogether, Petra held Signe in such high esteem that a man would have taken a fourth of such devotion for strong love; she often positively made Signe blush. As the priest and his daughter read aloud every evening, — Petra could not be induced to take active part in the readings, — they had become quite familiar with the prominent authors of northern literature, and had also made considerable progress in the acquaintance of the works of well-known foreign authors. The dramatists were chiefly read.

Just as they were about lighting the lamps to begin this evening, the kitchen-maid came in to say that there was some one outside who had a message for Petra. It proved to be a sailor from Petra's native town, whom her mother had charged to seek her, as he was coming in that direction. He had walked nearly seven miles, and must hurry off again, as his ship was about to sail. Petra accompanied him part of the way, desiring to talk further with him, for she knew him to be a trusty man. It was a very cloudy night; there was no light in any of the parsonage windows, except those of the laundry, where a large washing was being done; profound darkness reigned

along the road ; it was scarcely possible to distinguish the path until the moon rose triumphantly above the mountains. Still Petra walked bravely onward, and fearlessly entered the forest, although mysterious, unearthly shadows crept about among the fir-trees. One piece of news which had especially tempted her to follow the sailor was that Pedro Ohlsen's mother was dead, and that he himself had sold his house and moved to Gunlaug's, where he now occupied Petra's loft chamber. This had happened nearly two years since, but Petra's mother had not said a word about it in her letters. Petra could now readily conjecture who it was wrote these for her mother. She had often inquired, but had received no reply, and yet every letter ended with the words : "and a greeting from the person who writes the letter." The sailor's errand was to ask how long Petra intended to remain at the parsonage and what plans she had for the future. To the first question she replied that she did not know, and to the second that he might tell her mother there was but one thing in the world she wished to do, and if she failed in that she would be unhappy her whole life ; but for the present she could not tell what 't was.

While Petra was walking and talking with

the sailor, the priest and Signe remained behind in the sitting-room, speaking of her who was such a source of joy to them both. They were interrupted by the entrance of the overseer, and after he had rendered his account for the day, he asked if either of them knew that the young lady who was staying with them was in the habit of leaving her room at night by means of a rope-ladder and returning in the same way. He was obliged to repeat this three times before either of them understood what he meant; he might just as well have announced to them that it was her wont to walk back and forth on the moonbeams. It was dark in the room, and now it became perfectly still; not even the puffing from the priest's pipe was heard.

"Who has seen this?" said the priest at last, in a forced, husky tone of voice.

"I saw it myself. I was up foddering the horses; it must have been about one o'clock."

"You saw her going down a rope-ladder?"

"And up again."

Another long pause. Petra's room was in the upper story, in the corner facing the avenue leading to the house. She was alone up there, no one else had a room on that side of the house. There could, therefore, be no mistake.

"It is quite possible she may have done it in her sleep," said the servant, and was about to withdraw.

"Yes, but she could not have made a rope-ladder in her sleep," said the priest.

"Well, that was what I thought myself; and so it seemed to me best to tell you about it, sir. I have not spoken of it to any one else."

"Has any one beside yourself seen this?"

"No; but if you doubt it, sir, the ladder itself will, I suppose, be proof enough. If it is not up in her chamber I must have seen wrong."

The priest rose at once.

"Father!" entreated Signe.

"Bring a light!" replied the priest, in a tone that admitted of no opposition.

Signe lighted a candle.

"Father!" she once more implored, as she handed it to him.

"Yes; I am her father as well as yours, as long as she remains in my house, and it is my duty to look into this."

The priest went on in advance with the light, Signe and the overseer following. Everything was in perfect order in the little room, only the table in front of the bed was covered with open books, piled one upon another.

"Does she read at night?"

"I do not know; but she never puts out her light before one o'clock."

The priest and Signe exchanged glances. It was customary at the parsonage to retire for the night from ten to half-past ten, and to assemble again in the morning between six and seven.

"Do you know anything of this?" asked the father.

Signe made no reply. But the overseer, who was on his knees in the corner making a search, answered, —

"She is not alone."

"What is that you say?"

"Why, there is always some one talking with her, and they often speak very loud. I have heard her both begging for mercy and herself uttering threats. No doubt she is in some one's power, poor thing!"

Signe turned away; the priest had grown deathly pale.

"And here is the ladder," continued the man, producing the article as he spoke, and rising to his feet. The ladder was formed by two clothes-lines, fastened together by a third, which was tied in a knot, then drawn across and tied in another knot, at a distance of about

half a yard, and thus running back and forward formed steps.

"Was she gone long?" asked the priest.

The overseer looked at him.

"Gone where?"

"Did she stay away long after she came down the ladder?"

Signe was shivering with cold and terror.

"She did not go anywhere; she went up again."

"Up again? Then who did go away?"

Signe turned and burst into tears.

"There could not have been any one with her then; that was last evening."

"So, no one was on the ladder but herself?"

"No."

"And she went down and directly up again?"

"Yes."

"She has only wanted to try it, I suppose," said the priest, drawing a long breath, as though somewhat relieved.

"Yes, before she allowed any one else to get on it," added the overseer.

The priest looked at him.

"You think, then, this is not the first one she has made?"

"Of course it is not. How else could people have come to her room?"

"Has it been long since you knew of any one coming to her?"

"Not until this winter, when she began to use a light; it did not occur to me to come down here before."

"Then you have known this the whole winter. Why have you not told of it before?" the priest asked, sternly.

"I supposed that it was one of the household that was with her; but when I saw her last night on the ladder I first thought it might be some one else. Had it struck me sooner, I should have spoken of it."

"Well, it is plain enough, she has deceived us all!"

Signe raised her eyes in silent entreaty.

"She ought not, perhaps, to have her room so far away from the rest," suggested the overseer, as he rolled up the ladder.

"After this she ought not to have a room anywhere in this house," said the priest, and left the room, the rest following him. But when he got down-stairs and had put the light on the table, Signe came and flung herself into his arms.

"Yes, my child, this is a bitter disappointment," said he.

A few moments later, Signe sat in the corner of the sofa, with her handkerchief to her eyes: the priest had lighted his pipe and was rapidly pacing the floor. All at once they were aroused by screams from the kitchen and hurried steps were heard on the stairs and rushing along the passage above. Both hastened out. Petra's chamber was on fire! A spark from the candle had fallen in the corner, — for it was from there the fire came, — had swept along the wall paper, and was approaching the wood-work about the window, when it was seen from the road by a passer-by, who had at once run into the laundry and given the alarm to the people who were at work washing there. The fire was soon extinguished; but in the country, where everything has its own monotonous course, year out and year in, any disturbance serves to throw the people into a state of commotion. Fire is their greatest and most dangerous enemy; it is never out of their thoughts, and when it actually does appear some night, thrusting forth its head from the abyss, and greedily darting out its tongue after its prey, the people shudder, and it is weeks before they wholly regain their composure; some, indeed, never do so throughout their lives.

When the priest and his daughter were once

more alone in the sitting-room and had lighted the lamps, they both felt uncomfortable at the thought that Petra's room had thus swiftly been swept out by fire and everything that could remind them of her destroyed. Suddenly they heard Petra's clear voice asking questions and exclaiming aloud. She sprang up-stairs and down again, sped from chamber to passage and from passage to kitchen, and finally burst into the room with her out-door wraps still on.

"Good heavens! my room has been burned!" cried she.

There was no reply, but in the same breath, she asked, —

"Who has been there? When did it happen? How did the fire begin?"

The priest now said that it was he and Signe who had been up there; they had been looking for something, and he fixed his eyes sharply on Petra as he spoke. But not by the least sign did she show that she thought this strange, nor did she betray any uneasiness whatever as to what they might have seen in her room. She did not even suspect anything amiss when Signe did not look up from her sofa corner, but attributed this to Signe's fright and began to pour out a volley of questions about how the fire had been discovered, how put out, and who

had first reached the spot; and when she failed to get replies fast enough she darted out of the room as abruptly as she had come in. Presently she broke in again, having now partly removed her out-door wraps, and fell to telling the priest and Signe how the whole thing had happened, how she herself had seen the flames and hastened home with the most alarming speed, and how thankful she felt to find matters no worse. While speaking she took off the rest of her out-door things, carried them away, then returned, and took her accustomed place at the table, keeping up an incessant chatter about what this one had said, that one had done. The whole gard had been turned upside down, she reported, and this afforded her infinite amusement. As her listeners persisted in their silence, she began to express regret that all this excitement had spoiled the evening for them; she had been looking forward with so much pleasure to "Romeo and Juliet," the play they were then reading aloud, and she had intended that same evening to ask Signe to read aloud once more the scene that seemed to her the most beautiful of all: Romeo's parting from Juliet on the balcony. In the midst of her stream of words one of the maids came in from the laundry to say that they needed

clothes-lines ; a whole bunch was missing. Petra's face was speedily covered with blushes.

"I know where they are ; I will get them for you," she said, taking a few steps forward, and then, remembering the fire, she paused and colored still more deeply.

"But, — oh, dear ! they must be burned ! They were in my chamber !"

Signe had turned eagerly toward her. The priest gave Petra a sharp side glance.

"What use had you for clothes-lines ?" And his breath came and went so rapidly, he could scarcely speak.

Petra looked at him ; his terrible solemnity almost alarmed her, but in the next moment it tempted her to laughter. This she strove against for a while, but a second glance at him made her burst into such hearty laughter that it was no longer of any use to resist. There was no more evil conscience in her laugh than in a rippling brook. Signe knew this from its ring, and she sprang up from the sofa, with —

"What is it ? What is it ?"

Petra turned, laughed, bounded off, tried to escape, and made for the door. But Signe stood in her way.

"What is it ? Tell me, Petra."

Petra buried her face on Signe's shoulder,

as though she would thus hide herself, but she continued to laugh immoderately. Nay, guilt does not act thus! The priest, too, comprehended this now. He who was about leaping up into a towering rage, now instead came tumbling down into the most overpowering laughter, and Signe followed his example. Nothing is more infectious than laughter, and especially laughter, the cause of which is not quite clear. The vain efforts that now the priest, now Signe made to find out what they were laughing at only increased the merriment to the highest pitch. The maid, who stood waiting, was finally compelled to laugh aloud with them. She burst out into one loud horse-laugh after the other, and she felt herself that it was not in keeping with such fine furniture and gentle-folks, and so she hastened to the door to give full vent to her hilarity in the kitchen. Thither, of course, she bore the infection, and soon a perfect deluge of laughter came rolling in from the kitchen, where there was even less knowledge of its cause than in the parlor, and this kindled the laughter in there anew.

When finally they were almost exhausted, Signe made a last attempt to learn the meaning of all this laughter.

"Now you shall tell me," she cried, clinging to Petra's hand.

"No ; not for all the world !"

"Yes ; but I know already what it is !" she cried again.

Petra looked at her and uttered a scream ; but Signe exclaimed, —

"Father knows all about it, too."

Petra did not scream now, she fairly yelled, and, tearing herself away, fled to the passage-door ; but there Signe caught her again. Then Petra turned to struggle with her ; she was determined to get away at any cost ; she laughed as she kept struggling, but tears were in her eyes. This made Signe let go. Out rushed Petra, Signe after her, and both darted into Signe's chamber. There Signe seized Petra about the neck, and Petra flung her arms around Signe.

"Good heavens ! Do you know it ?" whispered Petra, and Signe whispered in reply : —

"Yes, we were up in your room with the overseer ; he had seen you — and we found the ladder."

Another shriek and a fresh flight, but this time only as far as the sofa corner, where Petra took refuge. Signe soon followed her, and, bending over her, poured into her ear the

whole story of the voyage of discovery and its fiery results. That which but a brief period earlier had caused her both tears and alarm now struck her as amusing, and she related it with considerable humor. Petra alternately listened and stopped her ears, looked up, and buried her face. When Signe had finished and they were both sitting side by side in the dark, Petra whispered : —

“Do you know what it all means? I cannot possibly sleep at ten o'clock when we go each to our rooms, what we have been reading has too much power over me. So I commit to memory all the finest passages, and in this way I know whole scenes by heart and repeat them aloud to myself. When we came to Romeo and Juliet, it seemed to me that nothing in the world could be more lovely; I grew perfectly wild about it, and I could not help making that attempt with the rope-ladder. It had never occurred to me before that any one could go up and down on a rope-ladder. I got hold of some clothes-lines, and that rogue, it seems, was standing below watching me. Indeed, it is no laughing matter. Signe; it is so tom-boyish; I never shall be anything but a tom-boy; and now, of course, to-morrow I shall be the talk of the whole parish!”

But Signe, who had been seized by a fresh fit of laughter, fell over Petra with kisses and caresses, and exclaimed : —

“ Ah, father must know this ! ”

“ Are you mad, Signe ? ”

Down they ran to the sitting-room, one after the other, with the same speed they had left it. At the door they almost upset the priest, who was just about leaving the room to see what had become of them. Signe began her story. Petra, with a scream, ran off once more, but paused outside of the door, recollecting that she should remain to prevent Signe from telling it ; so she thought she would go in again, but the priest held the door ; it was impossible to get it open. She pounded on it with both hands, sang, stamped her feet on the ground, in order to drown Signe's voice ; but Signe only spoke the louder, and when the priest had heard the whole and had laughed as heartily as Signe over this new method of studying the classics, he opened the door ; but then Petra ran away.

After supper, at which Petra had been present and had been duly teased by the priest, she was condemned, by way of punishment, to repeat what she knew. It proved that she knew the most famous scenes, and not merely one rôle in each but all the parts. She recited just

as they had been in the habit of reading ; at times there was a flash of fire in her manner, but she quickly smothered it. No sooner did the priest observe this than he called for more expression, but she only grew the more shy. They went on and on, they continued for hours, she knew the comic scenes as well as the tragic ones, the playful as well as the serious ; her memory aroused both their surprise and their laughter ; she laughed herself and begged them only to try, too.

"I really wish the poor actresses had an eighth part as good faculties as you have," said Signe.

"God forbid that she should ever become a play-actor !" exclaimed the priest, suddenly turning grave.

"Why, father, I hope you do not think Petra has any such idea ?" cried Signe, laughing. "I only spoke of actors because I have always found, without exception, that those who from their youth up have been trained to a knowledge of the poetry of their own land have not the least desire to go on the stage, while those who have very little acquaintance with poetry until they are grown up, rave about the stage ; it is the suddenly aroused yearning that carries them away."

"That is doubtless very true," said the priest. "We certainly rarely find a person of any education on the stage."

"And still more rarely one who has had poetic culture."

"Yes, and when this does happen, it is doubtless due to some lack in the character which permits variety and frivolity to gain the upper hand. I have met with many actors, both in my student days and during my travels, but I have never known, nor have I heard of any one else knowing, one who led a truly Christian life. They may have felt a desire for it — that I have seen ; but there is so much restlessness, so many disturbing influences, in their career, that they find it impossible to gain control over themselves, even long after they have left the stage. Whenever I have spoken with them about this, they have admitted it themselves and deplored it ; but soon, however, they have added : ' We must console ourselves with the fact that, after all, we are no worse than so many others.' But this is what I call a poor consolation. A life that in nowise tends to build up the Christian character within us is a sinful one. The Lord have mercy on all who must lead a life like this, and may He keep from it all who are pure in heart! "

The next day, Saturday, the priest was up as usual before seven, went on his morning rounds among his work-people, then took a longer walk and came home at day-break. Just as he was passing the house into the courtyard, he espied an open exercise-book, or something of that sort, which doubtless had been thrown out of Petra's window and not found because it was the color of the snow. He picked up the book and carried it into the study. As he spread it out to dry, he observed that it was a discarded French exercise-book in which verses were now written. It did not occur to him to look at these verses, but his eye accidentally fell on the word "actress," written up and down, up and down, everywhere — it was even to be seen in the verses. He sat down to examine it more fully.

After many attempts and erasures, he found the following rhymes, which, although still full of corrections, could readily be deciphered : —

" Dear, come hither, and listen to me,
While I whisper you trustfully what I would be !
I would fain be an actress, and show to mankind
The heart of a woman, her passions, her mind ;
How she smiles and delights, how she mourns and deploras ;
How wholly she trusts, how fondly adores :
How she smiles down on life, when tender and winning !
How she blights like a curse, when scornful and sinning !
O God ! on my knees, Thine assistance I claim !
Devote Thou my life to this one cherished aim ! "

A little below was written the following lines: —

“O God, among Thy glorious band
Of workers let me take my stand!”

Then below this, again, probably by way of a commentary to a poem they had read some months before: —

“Roaming, rambling over the lea,
Airily,
I'll away, away,
A naiaid — a fay —
With a ladder of moonbeams under my arm —
Warily!
A ladder of moonbeams, wrought by a charm,
Of moonbeams and mist,
By the long grasses kissed,
As I hide there, or wander wherever I list.
If any dare peep, as I'm flashing along,
If any dare list, while I warble my song,
He shall die!
Shall he die? Nay, surely t'were wrong.”

Then, after many erasures and crossings over, designs, and notes, came: —

“Hop, sa, sa — hop, sa, sa,
Dancing with all, but with no one remaining,
Tra, la, la — tra, la, la,
Winning all hearts, but my own heart retaining.”

Then distinctly and clearly the following letter: —

MY HEART'S HENRY: — Do you not think that you and I are the cleverest ones in the

whole comedy? It will cause us great annoyance; but that does not signify: I empower you to accompany me to the masquerade to-morrow evening, for I have never been to one, and I long for some genuine mad pranks, because it is so very quiet and dull in this house.

You are a great rogue, Henry! Whither are you wandering, pray, while here sits your

PERNILLE?

Last of all was written in large letters, distinctly and over and over again, the following verse, she must have found somewhere, and had taken this means of committing it to memory: — •

“ Thoughts beyond my thought's control
Wake a tumult in my soul;
They are strong and I am weak,
Power to give them birth I seek.
Thou, who gavest them to me,
Loke bind, set Balder free,
Satisfy the thirst for Thee;
Water from the hidden spring
Give me grace for men to bring.”

Many other things besides were written there, but the priest read no more.

So, then, it was in order to become an actress that she had come into his house and received instructions from his daughter. It was for this secret purpose she had listened so ea-

gerly while they read aloud every evening and committed it all to memory when she was alone. She had been deceiving them the whole time; even yesterday, when she had pretended to open her heart to them, she had been concealing something; when she was laughing the most heartily she was cheating them.

And this secret purpose of hers! That which the priest had so often condemned in her presence, *she* glorified as a divine calling and dared to invoke God's blessing on it! A life replete with exterior show and frivolity, idleness and sensuality, deceit and ever-increasing instability of character, a life over which vultures hover as over carrion; it was to this she yearned to devote herself, this she prayed God to sanctify! And to such a goal the priest and his daughter were expected to help her onward in the quiet parsonage, beneath the severe eyes of a regenerated congregation!

When Signe came in, bright and fresh as the winter morning, to greet her father, she found the study filled with tobacco-smoke. This was always an indication that something was amiss, and doubly so thus early in the morning. Without a word he handed her the book. She saw at once that it was Petra's; a recollection of the suspicion and pain of the preceding even-

ing flashed over her ; she dared not look in the book ; her heart beat so violently that she was forced to sit down. But the same word that had first attracted her father's attention now caught her eye ; she had to look again and thus read all. Her first feeling was one of shame — not on Petra's account, but because her father had seen this.

But soon she experienced the deep humiliation that arises from being disappointed in one who has been dearly beloved. In such instances a person who has been capable of disguises is apt for a moment to seem greater, more ingenious, more clever than ourselves, to glide away from us into the regions of the mysterious. But soon all the faculties of the soul unite in indignation ; honesty gains power over all those forces which, although hidden, do not savor of the mysterious ; we feel strong enough to crush with one blow the manifold cunning devices ; we despise what but now humiliated us.

In the sitting-room Petra had seated herself at the piano, and now they heard her singing :

“ Joy now is kindled, risen the day,
Stormed are the Night's cloud prisons away ;
Tents o'er the mountain-tops glowing,
Hosts of the Light-king are throwing.

'Up!' now cries the woodland bird,
'Up!' from childhood's lips is heard,
Up, too, my hope with sunrise."

Then a storm swept over the keys of the instrument, and out of it burst the following song: —

"Warning voices, I thank ye well,
But I and my boat are away,
To the sound of the luring billows' swell,
In the whirl of winds and of spray!
I must range the new path, I must hunt o'er the main,
Though I gaze on the Fatherland never again.

"Oh, not for pleasure and not for gain,
Drawn — drawn from the fading shore —
I would seek the bounds of the trackless plain,
The vast Unknown I'd explore.
So long as my bark cleaves the breakers in twain,
So long range I the path — so far hunt o'er the main."

Ah! this was more than the priest could bear! Striding past Signe, he snatched the book from her hand and stormed toward the door, and this time his daughter made no effort to hold him back. He rushed straight to Petra, flung the book on the piano in front of her, turned, and made the complete circuit of the room. When he came back to her she had risen, the book was clasped to her bosom, and she was looking about her on every side with a bewildered gaze. He paused in front of her, intending to tell her just what he thought of her, but so violent was his wrath at having

served as a tool for more than two years for this wily young person, and still more that his warm-hearted, devoted daughter had been made a dupe of, that he could not at once find words, and when he did succeed in doing so, he felt himself that they might be too harsh. Once more he took a turn about the room, walked right up in front of Petra again, his face fiery red, and then, without a single word, turned his back on her and strode away to his study. When he reached it, Signe was gone.

The whole of that day was passed by each in retirement. The priest dined alone ; neither of the girls made her appearance. Petra was in the housekeeper's room, which had been assigned to her after the fire. She had searched everywhere in vain for Signe to pour out her heart to her ; but Signe could not be at home.

Petra felt that she was standing on the verge of a crisis. The most secret thoughts of her soul had been rudely torn from her, and there was an effort about to be made to exert over her an influence she could not brook. She well knew that if she were to give up her cherished purposes, she would drift idly onward henceforth before the wind of chance. She could be happy with those that did rejoice, trustful with those whose hearts were filled

with trust, secure in everything; but it was through the strength inspired by that secret hope of hers that she might one day attain the goal of her aspirations toward which all the faculties of her soul were growing. Confide in any one after that first pitiful failure in Bergen — no, she would have found this impossible, even had it been Ødegaard himself! She must be alone with her secret until it was sufficiently developed to brave the breath of doubt.

But now a change had been wrought. The priest's flaming countenance looked incessantly down into her frightened conscience — she must seek deliverance. More excitedly, more hastily, than ever, she pursued her search for Signe; the afternoon wore on and still Signe was not to be found. The longer a person we are seeking remains absent from us, the greater seems the cause of the separation, and thus it came to pass that Petra finally arrived at the conclusion that she had been guilty of treachery in secretly availing herself of Signe's friendship for the furtherance of what Signe herself deemed sinful. The omniscient God must be her witness that never before had this view of the matter presented itself to her mind; she felt herself a great sinner.

As once before, in her own home, she was

overwhelmed by a knowledge of which but a moment previous she had not the faintest mis-giving! That anything so appalling actually could repeat itself, that she had not yet progressed one step, increased her anxiety to terror. She saw before her a future full of misery. But in the same proportion as her own sense of guilt increased, Signe's image rose in purity and magnanimous devotion. Truly, coals of fire were heaped upon her head. She longed to fling herself at Signe's feet; she wanted to entreat and implore her, and neither relax her hold nor cease her importunities until Signe had given her just one look of the old friendliness.

It had grown dark. Signe must be at home now, wherever she might have been. Petra sped along the passage to the wing of the house where Signe's room was, and found the door locked,—a sure sign that Signe was there. With throbbing heart Petra once more grasped the door-knob, and cried beseechingly:—

“Signe, please let me talk with you! Signe, I cannot bear this any longer!”

Not a sound from the room; Petra bent over, listened, and knocked again.

“Signe, oh, Signe! you do not know how unhappy I am!”

No answer. Again Petra waited and listened, but still there came none. When we thus fail to obtain a response, we are apt to doubt at last whether there is any one at hand to give it, even when we have reason to feel sure that there is, and when darkness surrounds us we become alarmed.

"Signe, Signe! If you are there, be merciful — answer me! Signe!"

But the silence remained unbroken. Petra shuddered and shivered. At this moment the kitchen-door was opened, letting out a broad, full stream of light, and brisk, buoyant footsteps were heard in the court-yard. This suggested a plan to Petra's mind. She would go out into the yard herself, and climbing on the ledge on the stone foundation of the wing, she would walk round the entire building in order to reach the other side, where the elevation from the ground was very great. She wanted to look into Signe's room.

It was a bright, starlit evening. The mountain, as well as the surrounding houses, stood out in sharp outlines, but the outlines alone were visible. The snow lay glittering around; the dark paths served only to increase its dazzling distinctness. From the road came the jingling of sleigh-bells; the merry sound and

the sparkling brightness of the night had an inspiring effect on Petra, and she sprang lithely on the ledge. She strove to cling to the projecting wood-work of the windows, but lost her balance and fell to the ground again. Then she seized an empty barrel, and rolling it up against the wall stepped on it and from it to the ledge. She now worked her way along by means of hands and feet together, advancing about a quarter of a yard with each effort; the strong fingers of a strong hand were needed to hold on vigorously; she could not get a firm grasp, for the wood-work scarcely projected an inch. She was fearful lest some one should see her, for it would naturally be thought this had some connection with her rope-ladder exploits. If she could only clear the side facing the court-yard, and reach the gable-wall. But when finally she succeeded in doing so, fresh danger awaited her; for there were no blinds to the windows, and she was compelled to stoop as she passed each window, in constant terror of falling. On the main wall of the wing the foundation was very high and beneath ran a gooseberry hedge, which would certainly receive her should she fall. But she had no fear. Her fingers smarted, her muscles quivered, a tremor ran through her whole frame

but she went on. Only a few steps more and the window was reached. There was no light in Signe's room, and the curtain had not yet been drawn down; the moon shone full in the room, so that the innermost corner was plainly visible. This gave Petra fresh courage. She reached the window-sill; she could at last take hold with her whole hand and rest, for now that the goal was reached, her heart began to throb so violently that she could scarcely breathe. As this only grew worse the longer she waited, she felt that she must make haste, and suddenly she leaned her whole person against the window. A wild cry broke from the room. Signe had been sitting on one corner of the sofa, and now with a bound she stood in the middle of the room, warding off the dreadful apparition, wildly and with gestures of horror, then turned and fled. This figure on the window-panes in the bright moonlight, this reckless, offensive daring, this face outlined by the moon, all aglow with excitement! In the twinkling of an eye Petra realized that her unlucky fancy in itself was enough to fill any one with terror, and that her image would no doubt henceforth be a continual source of terror to Signe; consciousness forsook her, and with a piercing shriek she fell to the ground.

Every person in the house had rushed out at Signe's cry, but had failed to find any one. This second cry set the whole gard astir, but all searching and shouting was in vain, until the priest chanced to look through the window in Signe's chamber and espied Petra lying among the bushes. A great fear fell upon every one around, and it cost some exertion to get her free from the brambles. She was carried into Signe's chamber, as there was no fire in the housekeeper's room, was undressed and put to bed, where her hands and neck, which were pretty badly torn, were bathed by some, while others made the room comfortable, bright, and warm.

The calm coziness of the room, the snowy white drapery of the windows, toilet-table, bed, and chairs, all made her think of Signe. She called to mind her pure, loving nature, her gentle voice, whose accents betokened the utmost guilelessness, her delicate comprehension of the thoughts of others, her tender benevolence. From all this she had now shut herself out; soon she would be banished from this room, in all probability obliged to leave the gard. And whither should she then go? People are not likely to be taken in a third time from the highway, and even if this were possible she no

longer desired it, for it would only end in the same way. Not a living soul could have confidence in her again ; whatever might be the cause of this, she felt that it was so. She had not gained one step, she felt that she would never advance any, for without the confidence of our fellow-creatures progress is an impossibility. How she prayed, how she wept ! She tossed and writhed in her anguish of spirit until she became exhausted and fell asleep.

Soon in her sleep everything became snowy white, gradually, moreover, lofty as well ; in her whole life she had never seen such lofty heights and such a dazzling glitter of millions of stars.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN she awoke she was still in those higher regions ; daylight's thoughts, which soon filled her mind, made an effort to soar up there, too, but they were taken captive and borne by something that filled the whole atmosphere, — it was the ringing of the bells on Sunday morning. She sprang out of bed and dressed herself ; then she found a little to eat in the pantry, put on some warm wraps, and hastened away, — she had never before so thirsted for the word of God ! When she came to the church, the service had just begun, and the door was closed ; it was a cold day, and her fingers smarted when she took hold of the door knob to turn it. The priest was just standing before the altar, and so she waited near the door until he was through saying mass. While the deacon was removing the chasuble she went to the so-called bishop's pew, which stood in the chancel with curtains around it. The priest's family had a pew in the gallery ; but when a person, for some reason or other, desired to sit

alone and hide from the sight of the others, it was customary to resort to the bishop's pew. When she reached it and stole in, she discovered Signe sitting there already in the inmost corner. She took one step to go out again, but just then the priest turned to leave the altar and pass her as he went to the vestry; she hastened into the pew again and sat down as far as possible from Signe, who had dropped her veil. This hurt Petra's feelings. She let her eyes wander over the congregation that filled the high wooden pews, the men on the right and the women on the left side. Their breaths filled the air above their heads like a floating mist; on the windows the frost was an inch thick, the clumsy wooden images, the dragging, heavy singing, the people wrapped in their winter clothes — all corresponded; everything seemed hard and far away — she was reminded of the impression she got on that memorable afternoon when she left Bergen; here, too, she was merely a timid traveler.

The priest appeared in the pulpit. He, also had a severe look. His prayer was: "Lead us not into temptation!" We are conscious, he said, that the faculties which God has given all have in them an element which tempts us to do wrong; but he besought God to be merciful

and not to try us beyond our strength. For this we must ever remember to pray ; for only when brought in subordination to Him would our talents and faculties work out our salvation.

In the sermon the priest further developed the same theme, discussing our double duty, that of performing our life-work, each in the position where his talents and circumstances have placed him, and that of bringing forth a truly Christian character in ourselves and in those intrusted to our care. We must be careful in the choice of our vocation, for there are vocations that are sinful in themselves, while there are other callings which may prove a source of sin to us, either because they are not suited to our capabilities, or because they suit too well our evil desires. Again : Certain as it is, that we must try to choose our work in accordance with our faculties, it is equally certain that a choice which seems both correct and good, may prove a source of temptation to us, if we, from love of it, permit it to consume all our time and occupy all our thoughts. Our duties as Christians must not be neglected any more than our obligations to our children. We must be able to concentrate our thoughts upon ourselves in order that the spirit of God

may be permitted to do its work in our hearts ; we must be able to plant and cherish the good seed of Christianity in the hearts of our children. There is no duty, no pretext, that can excuse us here, though the performance may be modified by circumstances.

Thereupon the priest went further, and entered into the vocation of *those* who sat before him ; he entered into their homes, their circumstances, and their opinions. Finally he produced a number of examples, by way of illustration, from other and higher walks in life, thus throwing side-lights on the topic discussed. The moment the priest became animated in his sermon, he seemed a new man to him who knew him only in every-day life. Even his external appearance was changed : his compact, strong face had become transparent, as it were, revealing the thoughts that throbbed within. His eyes grew larger, and in their firm and steadfast gaze was a message to every person in the congregation. His head, with its hairy mane, was magnified and made him look like a lion whose voice rolled out in long thunder tones, or came forth in short, violent phrases, sinking at times into a whisper, but only to rise again to greater heights. He could not in fact speak except before a large audience and under the in-

aspiration of thoughts of eternity ; for there was no eloquence in his voice, before it reached a screaming pitch ; there was no expression in his countenance and no striking perspicuity in his thought, before it was all ablaze with zeal. Not that he had failed till now to find the theme to kindle it ; no, if affliction had gathered rich treasures into his soul, reflection had done no less. He was a hard worker, and devoted himself largely to retirement and reflection. But he was not always in the mood for the ordinary affairs of life ; his thoughts lacked the power of expression in conversation ; he must be allowed to do all the talking, or, at least, he must be vigorously pacing the floor, while the conversation was in progress. To begin a debate with him was almost like attacking a defenseless man, but still it was dangerous ; for his conviction soon made resistance with so much violence that there was no time for arguments. Were he, however, compelled to give reasons, he would do one of two things : he would either pour such a stream of words upon his opponent that the discussion was apt to end unpleasantly, or he would stop short, as if in fear of himself. No one could more easily be silenced than this strong, eloquent man.

When the priest began the prayer, Petra

trembled, for she understood whence the text was taken. The farther he progressed the nearer she felt he came to herself. She shrank back, and observed that Signe did the same. But the vigorous man cut his way without mercy; the lion was out seeking for prey, — Petra felt herself pursued on every side, hemmed in, and captured; but what was seized so harshly, was held gently in the hand of mercy. Without a word of condemnation she seemed to be laid captive in the arms of Him who is infinite love. And there she prayed, and wept, and she heard Signe do the same, and she loved her for it!

When the priest descended from the pulpit and passed Petra and Signe on his way to the vestry, his countenance still beamed from his communion with the Lord. His searching glance fell on Petra, but as she turned her open face toward him, a ray of gentleness met her. He looked hastily in the corner at his daughter, as he proceeded.

Shortly after Signe rose: her face was veiled, and so Petra did not dare go with her. She therefore lingered behind until later. Noon found all three together at the same table; the priest talked a little, but Signe was shy. As soon as the priest, who evidently desired to

talk about what had happened, made the faintest allusion to it, Signe turned the conversation in so modest and delicate a manner, that the priest was reminded of her mother; he grew silent and gradually became sad. It took but little to make him so.

|| Nothing is more painful than an unsuccessful attempt at reconciliation. || The family rose without being able to look at one another, much less to exchange the usual thanks for the repast. In the sitting-room the silence at length grew so oppressive that all three would fain have gone away, but no one wanted to be first to go. As for Petra, she felt that if she went, it would be never to return. She could not meet Sighe again, if she could not be permitted to love her; she could not endure to see the priest sad for her sake. But if she must leave, she must go without saying farewell, for how could she take leave of these people! Only the thought of it produced an emotion which she could scarcely control.

Every minute which prolongs a situation so oppressive, when each waits for the other to speak, makes it more insufferable. No one dares to stir from fear of attracting attention; every sigh is heard, the stillness itself is audible, for it seems like harshness. Suspense is

felt, because no word is spoken, and there is a dread lest somebody may say something.

Each one realized that this moment would never return. The walls that are built between heart and heart grow ; our own guilt increases, as does that of the others, with every breath we draw. We are by turns despondent and indignant ; for the person treating us thus is without compassion, is hard ; we will not bear it, we cannot forgive him. Petra could endure it no longer, she must either cry aloud or take flight !

Then sleigh-bells were heard in the road. Soon a man clad in a wolf-skin coat and seated in a sledge, with a driver behind on the box, was seen dashing past the garden and turning into the court-yard. All three now breathed more freely and waited for the relief which was coming ! They heard the stranger in the hall ; he was removing his traveling boots and coat and talking with the servant-girl who assisted him. The priest rose to meet the stranger, but turned again so as not to leave the two girls alone. Again the stranger's voice was heard in the hall, and now nearer, so that it made all three look up. But Petra rose and fixed her eyes on the door.

A knock was heard.

"Come in!" said the priest, much agitated. A man with a light complexion and spectacles stood in the door. Petra uttered a shriek and fell back in her chair. It was Ødegaard.

To the priest and Signe he did not come unexpected. He was to spend Christmas at the parsonage; but no one had said a word to Petra of this. That he came just at this moment, however, was a direct interposition of Providence, and this they all felt.

When Petra recovered her consciousness Ødegaard was standing before her and holding her hand. He continued to hold it, but said nothing; nor did she speak, she could not even rise. But a couple of tears rolled down her cheek, while she continued to fix her eyes on him. He was very pale, but his manner was perfectly calm and kind. He withdrew his hand, crossed the floor, and then went to Signe, who had stolen into the farthest window, behind her mother's flowers.

Petra longed to be alone, and so she left the room. Signe found plenty of household duties to keep her busy. The priest and Ødegaard, therefore, seated themselves in the study to drink a glass of wine, of which the traveler stood in need. Ødegaard was here briefly told of what the last days had brought forth. It

made him thoughtful, but he said nothing. Their conversation was interrupted in a singular manner.

Past the windows went two women and three men, one after the other, and the priest no sooner caught sight of them than he sprang to his feet and exclaimed, —

“There we have them again! Now we must arm ourselves with patience!”

Slowly and silently the women entered, followed by the men. They placed themselves in a line along the wall beneath the book-shelves and opposite the sofa where Ödegaard was sitting. The priest placed chairs before them, brought out others from the next room, and they all sat down, with the exception of a young city-dressed man, who refused and remained standing near the door. He had a defiant air, and kept both hands in his pockets.

After a long pause, during which the priest filled his pipe, and Ödegaard, who never smoked, carefully observed the visitors, a fair-complexioned, pale woman of about forty winters began the conversation. Her forehead was rather narrow, her eyes large, but restless; they did not seem to know which way to look. Finally she said, —

"That was a fine sermon you preached to-day, father. It suited well what has been in our minds of late ; for we at the Öygards have of late often had occasion to speak of temptation."

And she sighed.

A man with a short, thick, double chin and a large broad face, also sighed, saying, —

"Lord, teach us Thy ways ! Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity !"

And Else, the woman who had first spoken, again sighed, as she said, —

"Lord, wherewithal shall the young cleanse their ways so that they may heed Thy word ?"

The words sounded strange in her mouth, for she was no longer young. But a middle-aged man, who sat swaying back and forth with his head on one side, while his eyes were never really open, drawled out as if half asleep, the following lines : —

"None are safe from Satan's guile,
Sore temptation, many a wile,
Must the Christian's valor try,
Minded with his Lord to die."

The priest knew these people too well not to understand that this was merely the introduction, so he waited as if nothing had been said, although there was again a long pause, broken only by repeated sighs.

A little woman, who seemed still smaller because she stooped, and who was wrapped up in such a lot of shawls that she looked like a bundle of merchandise, — her face was, indeed, quite invisible, — now began to move about uneasily in her chair, and at length gave two faint coughs.

This at once aroused Else, who said, —

“There is no more playing or dancing at the Øygards now ; but ” — she paused again, while Lars, the man with the broad face and short double chin, interposed, —

“But there is one man, and that is Hans, the fiddler, who *will not* give it up.”

As Lars, too, seemed to hesitate as to whether he should say the rest or not, the young man spoke : —

“For he knows that the priest, too, has an instrument, to which they both dance and sing here at the parsonage.”

“It can’t be a greater sin for him than it is for the priest,” said Lars.

“The fact is the priest’s instrument serves as a temptation,” said Else, cautiously, by way of helping on the conversation to the point in view.

But the young man added, with more emphasis, —

"It is a stumbling-block to the young. As it is written, 'Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.'"

Here Lars came to his relief.

"And so we come to request you to send away that instrument of yours, or burn it, so that it may no longer be a stumbling-block" —

"To the young of your parish," added the young man.

The priest kept smoking his pipe most vigorously, and finally, making a visible effort to compose himself, he said: —

"To *me* there is no temptation in this instrument; on the contrary, it affords me recreation and relief. Now you know that whatever is able to divert our minds makes it easier for us to receive and understand good things; consequently I firmly believe that such things as this instrument are a help to me."

"And *I* know there are priests who, in accordance with the words of Paul, would rather make a sacrifice of such pleasures than offend the children of the parish," said the young man.

"It may be that I, too, formerly interpreted his words in that way," answered the priest "but I do not do so now. A person may give

up a habit or a comfort ; but he should avoid being narrow-minded and stupid for the sake of gratifying narrow-minded and stupid people. I would be wronging not only myself, but also those to whom I am to be an example, and I would be setting a bad example, an example contrary to my conviction."

It was not often that the priest could make so full an explanation when he was out of the pulpit. He added, —

"I will not give up my piano, I will not burn it, — I will listen to it frequently, for I often feel the need of it, and I cannot but wish that you, too, might occasionally, in an innocent manner, divert your minds with singing, playing, and dancing, for I regard these things as good and proper."

"Fy !" said the young man, tossing his head and spitting on the floor.

The priest's face turned red as blood, and perfect silence ensued. The man who sat swaying back and forth, struck up at the top of his voice the following hymn : —

" My God, on ev'ry side I see
Anguish, and pain, and care :
For men, whate'er their state may be,
Bend 'neath the cross they bear ;
And feeble flesh and blood rebel,
As every mortal knoweth well."

And then Lars remarked, in a low tone, —

“You say, then, that playing and singing and dancing are proper, do you? It is right to stir up Satan for sensual gratification, is it? That is what our priest says. Well, it is a good thing we have found it out! — Ah, he really says, that everything connected with idleness and sensuality tends to relieve and aid the mind; that what leads us into temptation is right and proper!”

But now Ödegaard made haste to interpose, for he saw by the priest's countenance that matters were coming to a bad pass.

“But tell me, my good friend, what is there which *does not* lead us into temptation?” he asked.

All looked at him from whom these well-considered words came. The question was in itself so unexpected that neither Lars nor the others could make an immediate answer. Then a voice came as from a deep well or out of the cellar, —

“Work does not.”

The words came from the bundle of shawls it was Randi, who, for the first time, opened her lips. A triumphant smile lighted up Lars' broad face; the light-complexioned woman looked with a believer's eyes at the speaker

and even the young man, who stood near the door, lost for a moment the sneering expression of his lips. Ødegaard understood that Randi was the chief person, though her head was not visible. He therefore addressed himself to her.

"Of what kind must work be, if it is not to lead us into temptation?"

She was unwilling to make a reply to this question, but the young man answered for her.

"The curse reads: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread!' It is, then, such work as gives us toil and trouble."

"And nothing but toil and trouble? May not work bring profit?"

Now he, too, was at a loss what to answer; but the man with the broad face and double chin felt moved to come to his relief.

"Yes," said he, "we may make all we can."

"Well, then work, too, may lead us into temptation; we may be tempted to make too much."

In this dilemma relief came from the sepulchre of shawls.

"Then it is the profit and not the work that leads us into temptation."

"Certainly; but what do you say if the work is carried to excess for the sake of the profit?"

The bundle of shawls lapsed into silence again, but Lars took the floor.

"What do you mean by carrying work to excess?"

"I mean when it makes you a brute, when it makes a slave of you."

"There should be slavery," said the young man, who had been quoting the curse.

"But can work when looked upon as slavery lead us to heaven?"

"To work is to serve God," cried Lars.

"Are you able to say that of *all* your work?"

Lars was silent.

"No; be reasonable, and admit that work can be carried to excess for the sake of profit, *as if it were the one object of our life*. Consequently, labor, too, has its temptations."

"Yes, my children, there is temptation in everything; nothing is free from it;" the priest now decided, as he rose and emptied his pipe as if to close the interview. A sigh was heard from the bundle of shawls, but no reply was made.

"Listen!" Ødegaard began again, and the priest filled his pipe once more, — "if our labor becomes profitable, that is to say, if it bears fruit, I suppose we are permitted to enjoy this fruit, are we not? If it gives us wealth, is it not proper for us to enjoy this wealth?"

His questions awakened grave doubts, and the visitors looked at one another.

"While you are reflecting I will answer," said Ødegaard. "God must have given us permission to try to turn his curse into a blessing, for He himself guided his patriarchs; He led all his chosen people to the enjoyment of wealth."

"The Apostles were forbidden to possess wealth," the young man interposed, in a tone of certain victory.

"Yes, that is true; for God wanted to place them *above* and *beyond* all human circumstances, that He might be to them all in all, — they were called by the Lord."

"We are all called."

"But not in the same sense; are you called to be an apostle?"

The young man's face turned pale as a corpse; his eyes grew dark under his heavy forehead; he must have had some special reason for taking the remark so much to heart.

"But the rich man must work, too," remarked Lars; "for work is commanded."

"Certainly, he must, although in other ways and for different purposes. Each one of us has his own peculiar task to perform. But tell me, must we work *all the time*?"

"We must also pray!" chimed in the fair-complexioned woman, folding her hands, as if recollecting that she long had neglected to pray.

"Ah, I see; we must pray whenever we do not work; is that it? Can any man do that? Must we not also rest."

"We ought not to rest before we are tired; then no wicked thoughts would tempt us; ah, no, then we would not be led into temptation," sighed Else again, and the psalm-singer once more fell in with a verse from the hymn-book:

"Go, then, tired heart and frame,
Seek rest in Jesus' name!
For ye, too, shall trouble cease,
For ye, too, shall come a peace, —
A little bed within the soil,
Free from any care or toil."

"Please be still, Erik!" said the priest, "and pay attention to what this man is saying."

And now Ødegaard began to sum up the conclusions: —

"You see: Work brings forth its fruit and requires rest. But my opinion about social intercourse, singing, playing, and the like is, that they, on the one hand, are the sweet fruits of labor, and that they, on the other hand, furnish the mind refreshing rest."

There was now great commotion in the camp; all eyes were fixed on Randi, for now the main body of the army must take the field; she swayed to and fro in her seat for a while, and then she began slowly and quietly, —

“There is no rest to be found in worldly singing and in playing and dancing; for such things excite the flesh to sinful lusts. Nor can that be a fruit of labor which destroys our work and makes us weak.”

“Ah, these things are full of temptation,” said the fair-complexioned woman, with a sigh.

This sentiment was reëchoed by Erik in a verse from the hymn-book: —

“Each day, we see, worse than before,
How sin is growing more and more.
Lies the garb of truth are wearing,
Vice the form of good is bearing;
Entering on our spirits, slyly,
There to rear their foreheads high.”

“Be silent, Erik!” said the priest; “you only confuse us.”

“Oh, yes; that is very likely,” answered Erik, beginning anew: —

“If specious flatterers seek to win
Do not thou be led astray;
Dread the open path of sin,
Keep thou in the narrow way.”

“Will you not hold your tongue, Erik! the

hymn is good enough ; but there is time and place for everything."

"Yes, yes, pastor, that is so, — time and place for everything, and so —

"In every place, at every time,
May thy soul be praises singing;
Therein every heart shall chime
Like the bells for worship ringing."

"No, no, Erik ; then the prayer would also become a source of temptation ; you would have to turn Roman Catholic and enter a monastery."

"The Lord forbid !" exclaimed Erik, opening his eyes wide, then shutting them again and beginning, —

"As foulest mire to purest gold
Is faith, to Popish error sold !"

"Hear me now, Erik ; if you cannot be silent, I beg you to leave the room. Where did we leave the discussion ?"

But Ödegaard had been listening to Erik with great amusement, and did not remember where the conversation had been interrupted. Then a peaceful voice was heard from beneath the bundle of shawls.

"I remarked that there can be no rest or fruit of labor in *that*, which" —

"Now I remember : in *that* which leads us into temptation, — and then Erik came and

demonstrated to us that prayer can also be a source of temptation. Now let us look and see what these things may lead to. Have you observed that happy people work better than those who are sad? Why?"

Lars perceived whither this was aiming, and so he said, —

"It is faith that makes us happy."

"Yes, if our religion is a cheerful one; but have you not observed that one's religion may be so gloomy that it turns the whole world into a penitentiary?"

The fair-complexioned woman kept sighing so incessantly that the bundle of shawls could not refrain from stirring again; but Lars gave her such a sharp look that she was silenced. Ødegaard continued, —

"The same occupation constantly, whether it be work, prayer, or amusement, would make us stupid and gloomy. You can dig in the dirt until you become a brute; pray until the habit makes you a monk; and play until you become a mere puppet. But combine the three! The change will strengthen the heart and soul; thus your work will be made more fruitful and your religion more cheerful."

"You would then have us cultivate cheerfulness," said the young man, with a sneer.

"To be sure! and as for yourself, you would in that way get friends in the world; for it is only when we are happy that we are able to see and love what is good in others. And you cannot love God unless you love your fellow-men."

No one venturing to contradict this statement, Ødegaard tried a second time to sum up the conclusions and put an end to the interview, saying, —

"The things which disenthral our minds, so that the Spirit of God can do its work in our hearts (for it does not work in the hearts of slaves); the things that do this must be a blessing, and amusements must therefore be right and proper."

The priest rose; he again had a pipe to clear.

In the stillness which now followed, and which was not broken by sighs, the bundle of shawls was again seen stirring, and finally Randi said, gently, —

"It is written, 'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God;' but can worldly singing and playing and dancing be to the glory of God?"

"No, not directly; but may we not ask the same question in regard to our eating, sleeping, and clothing ourselves? And yet we *must* do

these things. The inference, therefore, is inevitable that you must refrain from that which is sinful."

"Yes, but are not these things sinful?"

For the first time Ødegaard became somewhat impatient; he therefore merely answered:

"We read in the Bible that both singing and playing and dancing were common in ancient times."

"Yes, to the glory of God."

"Very well—to the glory of God. But why did the Jews always name God in connection with everything? Because they were children and had not yet learned to make distinctions. To children *all* strangers are 'the man.' To the child's question, 'Where does this or that come from,' we always give the same answer, 'from God.' But as grown men, when we speak to grown men we also name the intermediate cause; we name not only the giver, God, but also the person to whom we are indebted. Thus it is possible that a beautiful song may treat of God or lead us to God, although the name of God is not mentioned in it; for many things lead to Him, though indirectly. Our dancing, when we do it for our health and for innocent amusement, is a way, though it be an indirect one, of prais-

ing *Him*, who gave us health, and loves to preserve in us the hearts of children."

"Bear that in mind! think of that!" said the priest. He was conscious that he for a long time had misunderstood these things, and that he had misinterpreted them to others.

But Lars had long been occupied in silent reflection. Now he was ready. The grain had gradually been sinking from the broad brow down into the short, crabbed, lower part of the face; it had been crushed and ground, and the grist was now brought forth.

"Are, then, all kinds of fables, stories, and tales, all kinds of poetry and fiction, with which books are filled nowadays,—I say, are *they*, too, allowable? Is it not written, 'Keep thy lips from speaking guile.'"

"I am very much obliged to you for speaking of this. Your mind, you see, is like the house you live in. If it were so small that you scarcely could walk erect or stretch your limbs in it, you would have to go to the trouble of enlarging it. And just so poetry elevates and expands the mind! Should all our thoughts and ideas that are *beyond* our actual necessities be false, then the most necessary ones would also soon become so. They would so contract you in your earthly tenement that you would

never reach eternal life, the very goal for which you are striving, and it is these very thoughts, which by faith should bear you heavenward."

"But poetry, is not that something which has no foundation in fact; is it not falsehood?" inquired Randi, thoughtfully.

"No, there is often more truth in it than there is in what we actually see before our eyes," answered Ædegaard.

They all looked at him with skeptic eyes, and the young man remarked, —

"I never knew before that the stories about Cinderella had more of truth in them than there is in what I see with my own eyes."

They all tittered a little.

"Then tell me whether you always comprehend the things that you see around you."

"I suppose I am not sufficiently learned."

"Ah, the learned are even more at a loss to understand them than you are! I refer to such things in our every-day life as bring sorrow and pain and which make us worry ourselves gray, as the saying is. Do not such things happen to us?"

He did not answer, but from the depths of the bundle of shawls was heard, —

"Yes, very often."

"But supposing you read a fictitious story

which resembled your own experience in such a manner that it made you understand yourself; would you not say of that story which gave you the key to your own life, and which gave you the comfort and courage gained by knowledge, that you found more truth in it than in your own life?"

The light-complexioned woman said, —

"I once read a story which so aided me in my sorrow, that it almost turned my affliction into joy."

The bundle of shawls coughed faintly, adding, in a timid voice, —

"Yes, that is true."

But the young man would not give his consent to this concession, and so he asked, —

"Can anybody find comfort in the stories about Cinderella?"

"To be sure, everything has its use. That which is ludicrous has great influence over us, and the story of Cinderella shows in a humorous manner how one whom the world regards as most insignificant, may still be of great importance. It shows how everything is made to serve one who has a stout heart, and how there is a way where there is a will. Do you not think it might be well for both children and grown people to remember that story?"

"But to believe in witchcraft and trolls is superstition, is it not?"

"Who has said that you shall believe in them? They are mere *figures of speech*!"

"But we are forbidden to use images and figures; they are all devices of the devil."

"Is that so? Where do you find that?"

"In the Bible."

"No," the priest now interposed, "that is a mistake; for the Bible itself makes use of figurative language."

They all looked at him.

"It makes use of figures on every page," continued the priest, "for the oriental peoples have a marked tendency to express themselves figuratively. We have imagery in our churches and in our language; we employ it in wood, in stone, and on canvas; and we are unable to conceive the Godhead otherwise than through an image. Nor is this all. Christ makes use of figures of speech; and did not the Almighty Himself assume various forms and disguises when He revealed Himself to the prophets? Was it not in the form of a traveler He came to Abraham in Mamre and ate at his table? And if God can assume various forms and make use of figures, then man certainly can do so."

They all had to agree ; but Ædegaard rose and tapped the priest gently on the shoulder, saying, —

“Thank you, sir ! There you presented the most conclusive evidence from the Bible that the drama is allowable !”

The priest started in alarm ; the smoke which filled his mouth came forth voluntarily, as it were.

At this point Ædegaard crossed the floor and approached the bundle of shawls, and bent down to catch a glimpse of the face, if it had any ; but in vain.

“Are there any other questions you would like to ask ?” he inquired ; “for you seem to me like a person who has reflected on many things.”

“Oh, the Lord be merciful to me ; my thoughts are not always what they should be.”

“It usually is the case that one is, during the first period after the grace of conversion, so filled with joy at the wonders that have been wrought, that everything seems useless and improper. He is like the lover who desires nothing but his beloved.”

“Yes, but look at the first Christians. I should think we might take them for our examples.”

"No, their peculiar circumstances, placed as they were in the midst of heathens, were different from ours, and demanded of them a rigorous life. It is our duty to imbue the life, which we find about us, with a Christian spirit."

"But," said the young man, for the first time without bitterness, "there are so many passages in the Old Testament, which are in direct opposition to the spirit in which you speak."

"Yes, that is true; but those passages are now void. They are 'done away.' As Paul says, 'We are ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit.' And again, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.' And still further, 'All things are lawful unto me, but,' adds he, 'all things are not expedient.' But we are fortunate in having before us the example of the life of a man who demonstrates to us what Paul meant. I refer to that of Luther. You certainly believe that Luther was a good and intelligent Christian, do you not?"

They had no doubt of that.

"Luther's faith was cheerful. *His* was the faith of the New Testament! His opinion was that the devil was very apt to be lurking behind a gloomy faith. Luther's idea in regard to

fear of temptation was, that he who fears least is least apt to be tempted. He made use of all the faculties God had given him, including the capacity for enjoyment; of this his whole life is a proof. Would you like to have me cite a few instances? The pious Melancthon was at one time so busy at work upon an essay in defense of the pure doctrine that he did not allow himself time to eat. Then Luther snatched the pen from his hand, saying, 'We do not serve God by work alone, but also by rest and quiet; and this is why God has given us the fourth commandment and instituted the Sabbath.' Again, Luther employed figures of speech in his conversation and sermons, the amusing alternating with the serious, and he was full of splendid and witty conceits. He also translated good old folk-lore tales into his mother-tongue, and stated in the preface to them that he scarcely knew of anything better for moral instruction except the Bible. He played the lute, as you perhaps know, and sang with his children and friends, not only hymns, but merry old ballads, too. He was fond of social games, played chess, and he used to invite the young people to dance at his house. All he asked was that it should be done with modesty and propriety. All this an old, simple-hearted dis-

ciple of Luther, namely, the priest Johan Mathesius has recorded, and he even preached it to his flock from his pulpit. He urged his hearers to follow Luther's example. Let us do likewise!"

The priest rose, saying, —

"My dear friends, let this suffice for to-day."

And they all rose.

"Much has been said for our enlightenment," continued the priest; "now may the Lord bless the seed that has been sown!"

"You live, my dear friends, in remote and isolated places. Your homes are far up in the mountains, where the grain is cut by the frost oftener than by the scythe. Such barren and deserted mountain regions should never have been built upon. It would be better to turn them over to trolls and to the grazing cattle. Spiritual life does not thrive well up there and it becomes gloomy like the surrounding vegetation. Prejudices hang over life like the rocks beneath which they are developed; they cast a dark shadow upon your hearts and tend to divide you. May the Lord unite and enlighten you! I thank you for your visit, my friends! It has opened my eyes, also, to many new truths."

He took each one of them by the hand as he

bid them good-by, and even the young man extended his with cordiality, although he did not look up.

"You are going over the mountain; when do you get home?" asked the priest, as they were about to leave.

"Oh, some time to-night," answered Lars; "there has been a heavy fall of snow, and where it has blown off there is a thick layer of ice."

"Yes, my friends, you deserve great credit for seeking the church under such circumstances. May no harm befall you on your way home."

Erik replied in a low tone:—

"If God but keep me in His care,
Assault me all who may,
I can rejoice my heart in prayer
And tread the narrow way."

"That is true, Erik. You were right this time," said the priest.

"Wait a moment!" said Ödegaard, just as they were ready to start. "It is not strange that you do not recognize me; but I think I must have some relatives in your neighborhood."

They all turned to look at him, even the priest, who, of course, had known this fact, but had doubtless entirely forgotten it.

"My name is Hans Ødegaard, and I am a son of Knud Hansen Ødegaard, the priest, who, many years ago, with his scrip on his back, wandered forth from among you."

Then was heard from out of the bundle of shawls, —

"Good Heavens! Knud Ødegaard was my brother."

There was a universal pause, and no one seemed able to say a word. Finally Ødegaard asked, —

"So it was you I visited once when I as a little boy went up there with my father?"

"Yes, it was."

"And you stayed with me a while," said Lars. "Your father is my cousin."

But Randi remarked in a sorrowful tone, —

"So you are that little Hans! How fast time flies!"

"How is Else getting on?" asked Ødegaard.

"This is Else," said Randi, pointing at the woman with the fair complexion.

"Are *you* Else," he exclaimed. "You were in trouble about a love affair at that time. You wanted to marry the fiddler of the parish. Did you get him?"

There was no reply.

In spite of the twilight, which was now rap-

idly coming on, Ødegaard could see that Else was blushing, and that the men either turned away or looked down, with the exception of the young man, who kept his eyes fixed upon her. Ødegaard discovered that he had touched upon an unpleasant subject, and so the priest came to his aid.

"No, Hans the fiddler is not married. Else married the son of Lars, but she now is free once more ; she is a widow."

She again blushed crimson. The young man observed it, and smiled contemptuously.

But Randi interposed, —

"Yes, you must have traveled a great deal. I can see you have gathered a vast store of knowledge."

"Yes, up to this time I have done nothing but travel and study ; but now I am going to stay at home and set to work."

"Yes, that is the way of the world ! Some people go abroad and get light and wisdom, while others stay at home."

And Lars added, —

"It is often hard to turn the soil of the home-
stead, and when we help a man on with a hope
of making him useful to us, he deserts us."

"There are so many vocations in life," said the priest. "Each one must follow his bent."

"The Lord knows how to direct our work," said Ödegaard. "If God so wills, you may yet reap the fruits of my father's labors."

"Ah, yes, I have no doubt of that," said Randi, in a meek voice; "but it is often hard to wait. Time passes so slowly."

The visitors now took leave. The priest stood by one window and Ödegaard by another, watching them as they proceeded up the mountains. The young man brought up the rear. Ödegaard learned in regard to him that he was from the city, where he had tried various enterprises, but had always become involved in some dispute or other. He believed himself intended for something great, thought that he was destined to be an apostle, but for some unaccountable reason he had stopped up in the Ödegaard neighborhood, as some thought from attachment to Else. He was a very passionate man, who had met with many disappointments and was destined to encounter many more.

The visitors had again become visible on the mountain, as the roof of the stable no longer hid them from view. They would disappear among the trees and then come into sight again as they kept wearily climbing higher and higher. There was no path in the deep snow. The trees served as waymarks, and in the far

distance the snow-capped mountains were beacons pointing out to the wanderers their way home.

But from the sitting-room in the parsonage came a couple of charming preludes, and then, —

“ I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring!
To the Spring that is yet unborn!
I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring, —
And I marry Hope to the Morn,
And longings to longings, and my heart to the hour
That kindles the air with a mystic power!
And our youth and warmth we, too, will ally,
And join together — the Spring and I —
And woo, and win over, the Sun to our side,
Grim Winter to balk of his gloom and his pride,
Bursting his fetters, and freeing the rills,
To dance and sparkle over the hills;
And to din their laughter into his ear,
Till he needs must know that his fall is near;
Then, hunting him off from valley and brake,
By the fragrance of myriad blossoms that wake.
I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring!
To the Spring that is yet unborn!
I give my lays to the Spring, to the Spring, —
And I marry Hope to the Morn! ”

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER that day the priest spent but little time with the family; partly because he was busy getting ready for Christmas, and partly because he was engaged in studying whether the drama was allowable or not. The mere sight of Petra produced dismay and confusion in his mind.

While the priest, therefore, sat in his study, either writing his sermons or poring over a volume of Christian ethics, Ødegaard devoted his time to the ladies, between whom he was constantly making comparisons. Petra had a most changeable nature, and was never the same person. Whoever would learn to know her would have to study her as diligently as he would study a book. Signe, on the other hand, was most refreshing in her unvarying cordiality; her movements were never unexpected, for her very nature was reflected therein. Petra's voice had every color of tone; it was both shrill and gentle, and possessed every degree of intensity. Signe's was peculiarly pleasing, but

it lacked flexibility, — excepting to her father, who, in a masterly manner, was able to discriminate its slightest variations. Petra's mind was occupied by but one thing at a time: if it chanced to be attracted by different things at the same moment, it was merely to observe, never to offer any help or interference. Signe, on the other hand, had an eye for everything and everybody, and divided her attention in such a way that she scarcely seemed to be bestowing it on anything. Whenever Ødegaard spoke of Signe to Petra, the latter talked like a hopeless lover; but when he mentioned Petra to Signe, Signe became very reticent. The two girls often talked together, without restraint, but they conversed only about indifferent matters.

To Signe, Ødegaard owed a great debt of gratitude; for to her he was indebted for what he called his "new self." The first letter he received from Signe in his great sorrow seemed like a soft hand laid on his brow. She related so cautiously how Petra had come to them, misunderstood and persecuted, and explained with so much delicacy how her coming must have been the result of a Divine interference, "that no life might be blighted," that it sounded like a distant call in the forest when one has gone astray and knows not which way to take.

Signe's letters followed him wherever he went, and were the threads which bound him to life. She expected that every line would lead Petra directly to his arms, but the result was just the reverse; for the letters revealed the fact that nature had intended Petra to be an artist. This central point in her genius, which Odegaard himself had vainly sought, Signe was unconsciously, but none the less constantly, keeping in view, and as soon as he realized this fact he saw both her mistake and his own, and it made him a new man.

He took good care not to tell Signe what her letters had taught him. The first word should not come from Petra's friends, but from her own lips, in order that there might be no undue haste. But from the moment when he made this discovery, Petra had appeared to him in a new light. Why, of course, these ever-changing impulses, each felt in full power, but all a series of mutual contradictions, what were they but the beginning of an artist's life? The task must be to gather all these impulses into one grand whole, else all would be mere patchwork and her life a failure. She must not, therefore, be permitted to enter too early an artist's career! Her wishes must be

met with silence as long as possible, nay, if necessary, with opposition.

Occupied in this manner with Petra's future, she became, before he was aware of it, the sole object of his thoughts; but he was working for her advancement and not to secure her for himself. He now began to study carefully everything connected with art; he looked into the life of artists and particularly into that of actors. He found much that must shock a Christian, and saw that there were many and great abuses. But did he not find them everywhere about him? Were they not in the church, too? Though hypocrites might be found among the priests, still their calling was a high and noble one. When the work for truth, which is going on everywhere, shall be felt in life and in poetry, will it not reach the stage also?

He gradually gained confidence in the case he had in hand. It afforded him great pleasure to learn from Signe's letters that Petra was rapidly progressing, and that Signe was just the one to help her. He had now come home to visit and thank this guardian angel, who was not at all conscious of what she had been to him.

But he had also returned to see Petra once

more. How far had she advanced toward the goal? The word had been spoken. He could therefore freely talk with her about her future. It was a pleasant thought to both of them, for it enabled them to avoid speaking of the past.

Meanwhile, they were soon interrupted by guests from the city, both invited and uninvited! Still matters had so far developed that a single well-improved opportunity would be sufficient to clear away every obstacle—and this opportunity was afforded by the arrival of the guests. A large party was invited to meet them, and immediately after dinner, while the gentlemen were together in the study, the conversation turned upon the drama; for the chaplain of the diocese had seen a work on Christian ethics lying open on the priest's table, and had there discovered the terrible word "theatre." An animated discussion followed, and in the midst of it the priest came in. He had not been present at the dinner-table, having been called away to see a sick person. He was in a grave mood, he refused to eat, nor did he join in the conversation. But he filled his pipe and listened. As soon as Ødegaard noticed that the priest was sitting quiet and paying attention, he also took part, but his efforts to present his views were for a long time fruitless,

for the chaplain had a way of exclaiming, whenever a conclusion was to be drawn from the proofs already presented: "I object!" and so the proofs themselves had first to be proved. The consequence was that the discussion went backwards instead of forwards. The debate had already passed from the theatre to navigation, and now in order to settle a point in regard to navigation, it had gone into agriculture.

But at this juncture Ødegaard appointed the priest as chairman. Several other priests were present and a sea-captain. The latter was a small black-haired man with a very corpulent form. He walked on a pair of legs which beat the floor like as many drumsticks. Ødegaard gave the chaplain the floor in order that he might have an opportunity of presenting in a connected statement his objections to the theatre. Accordingly the chaplain began:--

"Even upright men among the heathens were opposed to the drama. Plato and Aristotle objected to it on the ground that it corrupted the morals. I admit that Socrates occasionally went to the theatre, but if anybody, from that fact, draws the conclusion that he approved the drama, then I deny it; for we have to see many things that we do not approve. The first Christians were zealously

warned against the stage. Read Tertullian! Since the drama has been revived in modern times earnest Christians have both spoken and written against it. I may refer you in this connection to Spener and Francke, and to such writers on Christian ethics as Schwartz and Schleiermacher."

"Listen!" exclaimed the captain, who recognized the last name.

"The two latter," continued the chaplain, "admit that dramatic literature is allowable, and Schleiermacher goes so far as to think that a good play may be performed by amateurs before a private company, but he totally condemns acting as a profession. The *life* of an actor is so full of temptations that *it is our* duty to shun it. But is not the stage a temptation to the spectators? To be moved by feigned suffering, to be stimulated by fictitious examples of virtue (a danger we can better guard ourselves against when we read), leads us to believe that it is ourselves we see represented. It weakens the will and destroys all energy. It awakens a morbid appetite for hearing and seeing strange things and makes us the slaves of a sickly fancy. Is not this true? Who are the people that mostly attend the theatre? Are they not idlers, who want to be amused,

sensualists, who must have their baser appetites gratified, vain men and women, who desire to parade themselves before the gaping multitude, visionary people, who fly hither and thither from the realities of life, which they have neither the strength nor perseverance to battle with? There is sin before the curtain as well as behind it! I never knew earnest Christians to have any other opinion on the subject."

"You really frighten me," said the captain. "If I have been in such a pitfall, every time I have been at the theatre, then the deuce take me, if" —

"Fy! captain," said a little girl, who had entered the room, "you must not swear, for if you do, you will go to hell."

"You are right, my child, you are right."

But Ødegaard took the floor: —

"Plato made the same objections to poetry as to the drama, and what Aristotle's opinion was is doubtful. I therefore pay no attention to them. But the first Christians did well to keep away from *heathen* theatres, so I may safely pass them by, too. That earnest Christians in modern times have had scruples in regard to the drama, even when it was produced in a Christian community, I can understand, for I have myself been in doubt on the subject. But

If it be granted that it is proper for the poet to write a drama, then it must be proper for the actor to act it; for what else does the poet do but act it mentally when he writes it with enthusiasm and passion? and we know that, according to Christ's own words, he who sins in his *thoughts* is guilty. When Schleiermacher says that the drama must only be acted privately by amateurs, then he asserts that the talents which God has given us are to be neglected, while the Creator designed that they should be developed to the greatest possible perfection; for to that end they were given. We are all actors every day of our lives, when we in jest or in earnest mimic others or make their opinions our own. This talent of imitating predominates in some persons, and then I would like to know whether he would not be the sinner who neglects to develop it. He who does not follow his calling becomes unfit for other work, leads an unsettled and disordered life, in short he falls a far easier prey to his passions than if he followed the calling pointed out to him by his faculties. Where work and pleasure are one, temptations are excluded. But, it is claimed, the calling of an actor is in its very nature full of temptation. Well, there are many kinds of temptation. To *my* mind

that calling is most apt to lead us into temptation which induces us to think ourselves righteous, because we bring a message from the Righteous One, which deludes us to believe we have faith, because we preach faith to others, or, to speak more plainly, to my mind the priest's calling presents the greatest temptations of all."

Then followed a noisy interruption.

"I object," cried the chaplain.

"He is right," said some one else.

"Order!" demanded the priest, who presided.

"I object," repeated the chaplain.

"He is quite right!" was shouted by an other.

"Order!" insisted the president.

"I never heard before that priests were worse than actors," interposed the captain.

This caused great laughter, and a shout came from all sides:—

"That is not what he said."

The captain: "I say he did, the deuce take me, if"—

"There! There! captain, the devil will soon be after you," said the little girl.

"You are right, my child, you are quite right," he answered.

Ødegaard resumed the broken thread of his remarks:—

“The danger of having our emotions excited, of acquiring a morbid appetite for hearing passionate and fanciful declamations, and of appropriating to ourselves the character of models in virtue is certainly present in the church no less than at the theatre.”

The statement again caused great clamor and confusion, which awakened a curiosity among the ladies to learn what was the matter. They opened the door, and when Ødegaard saw Petra among them, he said with more emphasis:—

“I admit that there are actors whose emotions are excited on the stage, and who when in church are no less deeply moved, and yet continue to be as wicked as ever. I am free to admit that there are on the stage many idle babblers, who would have been absolutely worthless in any other profession, while on the stage they fill a place for which they are adapted. But, as a rule, actors are like sailors, frequently placed in the most trying positions; for the moments preceding the *début* are apt to be terrible! Actors frequently become the instrument of some grand work in the hand of Providence; they are often brought face to face with unexpected, grand, and sublime scenes. All this fills their hearts with fears and aspira-

tions and with a sense of unworthiness, and we know that Christ chose his companions among publicans and penitent women. I accord no license to actors. The greater I deem their mission in the land — and the fact that a country produces so few really great actors is sufficient proof of the greatness of the task — the greater is their guilt if they permit themselves to be governed by rancorous feelings or to degenerate into loose frivolity. But there is no actor who has not been taught by a series of disappointments how insignificant is applause and flattery, although the majority pretend to have faith in both. Thus we see their mistakes and faults, but we do not sufficiently understand their own relation to them, and everything depends on that."

As Ødegaard resumed his seat, several gentlemen took the floor, and every one of them began to speak at the same time, when a voice was heard at the piano in the adjoining room, singing, —

"Of the days of my youth now I dream,"

and all the gentlemen hastened into the parlor.

It was Signe who was singing, and the guests knew of nothing more beautiful than her Swedish ballads. One song followed another, and now when these finest popular melodies to be

found in the whole world, the most faithful expression of the soul of a great people, had produced an elevating effect upon the auditors, who listened with expectant rapture, Ædegaard rose and requested Petra to recite a poem. She must have anticipated it, for a scarlet blush overspread her face. But she immediately came forward, though she trembled and had to lean on the back of a chair for support, and then with a countenance pale as death, she began :—

“ He longed for the life of a Viking bold,
He pined for the stormy sea;
His mother was feeble, his father old —
There was none, save he, the house to hold.
' Now here,' said the father, ' is a marvel to me,
That thou shouldst so pine for the stormy sea,
Who hast not a lack to be told.'

“ He sat and watched the clouds at night
Drift dark through the gloomsome sky:
He looked and longed, with main and with might,
Warriors seemed they, bound to the fight!
He sat and watched the morning break,
And the glorious sun bound forth, awake —
A monarch, whose robes were light.

“ He wandered down to the rocky shore,
Small share of work did he,
He heard the blustering breakers roar,
Shouting the deeds of the days of yore;
He saw, in the fight, the seething spray
Torn from the billows and tossed away:
And the heat of his heart grew more.

" The world was just free of old Winter's chains:
It was in the sweet springtide;
And out on the stormy, steel-gray main,
A war-ship fought to be free again,
Tugged at her anchor, and flapped her sails,
Tattered and torn by a hundred gales,
And writhed like a creature in pain.

" The sailors slept mid the ocean's roar,
Or caroused on the brine-washed deck;
When a voice fell down from the beetling shore —
Reckless and mad were the words it bore
' Do ye fear to ride, now the waves run high?
There is joy in the venture that death is nigh:
Give me the rudder — I 'm longing sore! '

" Long and loud laughed the scornful crew;
' Hark, how the bantling crows! ' they said,
And they fell to their cups and their ease anew.
But a crag he tore from the rock, and threw —
Two men fell crushed, with a shriek of pain!
The sailors sprang to their feet again,
And all their weapons drew.

" Up flew the darts, like birds of prey
Athirst for his young heart's blood;
Head bare, he stood to the open day;
He tossed, with his hand, the arrows away.
' Wilt thou yield the rule of thy brig to me,
Or fight, which lord of us twain shall be?
Whether, O chieftain, say.'

" For answer, sped through the air a spear,
It grazed the gallant's cheek.
Loud fell his laugh on the Viking's ear:
' The arm is not forged that my life should fear!
In Valhal, as yet, they wait not for me —
But long, O chief! hast thou plowed the sea:
For thee, the port looms near.

" 'So thy bark and her fortunes yield to my hold,
For the pulse of my heart beats high!'
The skipper smiled: 'Thou art daring and bold,
If thou longest so sorely, as thou hast told,
Come, be my warrior!' He answered, 'Nay—
I was born to command, and not to obey!
The young must supplant the old.'

" Then down he sprang on the loose crags, nigher,
And flung these words o'er the wave:
'Champions, bound not by love of hire,
But who follow the lead of the soul of fire,
Let the stoutest arm in the battle prove
Which of us twain has the War-god's love—
Which of us twain is the higher!'

" To the corsair's brow leapt an angry glow,
He dashed him into the wave;
He cleft the breakers with many a blow,
Fighting to shoreward, fiercely and slow,
Till he clutched the shingles, free from all harms,
And was taken up by the strong young arms—
Then all on board breathed low.

" But the chieftain looked in the stripling's eye,
And read there the soul of fire;
And it pleased him well, though his hour was nigh,
That the mien of his foeman was gallant and high.
'Fling him arms,' shouted he to the watchers on board:
'If I perish to-night, it shall be by my sword
In a hero's hand that I die!'

" All under the cliff, by the rock-strewn shore
Ah, fierce was the strife, and strong!
Rang many a shout mid the tempest's roar:
Crashed many a blow, that the wild winds bore—
The crags moaned back: in the heart of the mere
The foul sea-dragon snorted for fear,
Then grew still—for the fight was o'er.

"All under the cliff, on the lonesome strand,
Lay the chief of the corsair crew.
Then rose a shriek from the lawless band:
'Perished our lord, by this wolf-whelp's hand!
And over the vessel, and into the wave,
Breaker and hurricane daring to brave,
Reckless, they battled to land.

"But up he raised him, the skipper bold,
And, feebly, thus spake he: —
'The Saga ends when the triumph is told,
And the life must close when the heart grows cold
Warriors! here is a chieftain, fain
To storm with ye o'er the restive main:
The young must supplant the old!'

"Dark, dark, they stood there, the pirate-horde,
Wild, wild, sobbed the swelling sea;
He showed, with his finger, the youthful lord,
His place was waiting at Odin's board:
And his spirit fled. And the waves wailed loud,
The youth stood fearlessly there, and proud,
And leaned on the chieftain's sword.

"Slow, slow, all eyes were on him turned
There leapt to his cheek a fire;
His bosom throbbed, and his temple burned:
He sprang to a rock that the rough sea spurned —
'Warriors! rear me a hillock of stones,
That a trophy be raised o'er the hero's bones,
As his dauntless deeds have earned!

"But, ere eve, our bark must be on the wave,
And all our sails unfurled;
For many a hazard have we to brave,
And many a venture and exploit to crave.
Life, my masters, is eager and fleet;
And idle and vain are the loitering feet,
That stay to mourn o'er a grave!'

' All over the sea, at the close of day,
Swept a dirge, like a bird of night;
It died — mid the rocks where the chieftain lay:
It died — and the glow of the sun's last ray
Crimsoned the white of the fluttering sails,
Unfurled once more to defy the gales,
And fly o'er the trackless way.

" Proud stood the youth at the rudder's head,
His hair in the gusty wind.
Close by the coast the vessel sped,
' Who steers the corsair's craft ? ' they said;
' He will run the bark on the surging reef ! '
But the father looked on the youthful chief,
And could not speak, for dread.

" Ah ! he smiled on his sire with mirthful glee,
From amid the surf and the spray :
' I am here to claim permission,' said he,
' A lord of the winds and billows to be !
A lack have I, that must needs be told —
I long for the life of a Viking bold,
I pine for the stormy sea ! ' "

The poem was recited with a trembling voice, but with dignity and without the slightest trace of affectation. Her audience stood electrified, for a ray of sublimity, beautified by all the gorgeous colors of the rainbow, was beaming upon them. Not a word was spoken and no one dared stir; but the captain was no longer able to restrain himself. He sprang to his feet, and, puffing and gesticulating, he exclaimed : —

" I do not know how the rest of you feel, but

for *my* part, when I am surprised in this manner, then the deuce may take me, if " —

"Captain! there you swore again," said the little girl, pointing at him with a menacing finger; "the devil will come and take you right away."

"Well it makes no difference, my child; let him come, if he wants to, for now, the deuce take me, I must have a national song."

Without any other special urging, Signe took her seat at the piano, and the whole company joined, with merry voices, in the following song: —

 " My land will I defend,
 My land will I befriend,
And my son, to help its fortunes and be faithful, will I train;
 Its weal shall be my prayer,
 And its want shall be my care,
From the rugged old snow mountains to the cabins by the main.

 " We have sun enough, and rain,
 We have fields of golden grain;
But love is more than fortune, or the best of sunny weather;
 We have many a Child of Song,
 And Sons of Labor, strong,
We have hearts to raise the North Land, if they only beat together.

 " In many a gallant fight
 We have shown the world our might,
And reared the Norseman's banner on a vanquished stranger's
 shore;
 But fresh combats we will brave,
 And a nobler flag shall wave,
With more of health and beauty than it ever had before!

“ New valor shall burst forth;
For the ancient three-cleft North
Shall unite its wealth and power, yielding thanks to God the Giver!
Once more shall kinsmen near
To their brethren's voice give ear,
And the torrents of the mountains wed their forces in the river

“ For this North Land is our own,
And we love each rock and stone,
From the rugged old snow mountain to the cabins by the main;
And our love shall be the seed
To bear the fruit we need,
And the country of the Norsemen shall be great and *one* again!”

Here Signe rose from the piano, approached Petra, put her arm about her waist, and drew her into her father's study, which was empty.

“ Petra, shall we be friends again?”

“ Oh, Signe, then you do at last forgive me!”

“ I could do anything now! Petra, do you love Ödegaard?”

“ Good heavens, Signe!”

“ Petra! I have thought so ever since the first day, — and I supposed that he was now at length come to — all that I for two years and a half have thought or done for you, has been done with this object in view, and father has been of the same opinion. I am sure he has talked with Ödegaard about it before this.”

“ But, Signe!” —

“ Hush!”

Signe laid her hand on Petra's lips, and has-

tened out of the room. Somebody had called her. The guests were asked to sit down to tea.

There was wine on the table, because the priest had been absent from dinner. During the supper the host sat very quiet and very earnest, as if there had been no guests at the table. But when the others were about to rise he tapped his wine-glass and said: —

“I have a betrothal to announce!”

All fixed their eyes on the young ladies, who sat side by side scarcely knowing whether they should sink under the table or retain their seats.

“I have a betrothal to announce!” the priest repeated, as if finding it difficult to make a beginning.

“I am free to confess that at first I was not in favor of it.”

All the guests looked at Ödegaard, in great amazement, but their astonishment knew no bounds when they saw him quietly looking at the host.

“To tell the truth, I did not think the bridegroom worthy of the bride.”

Here the guests became so embarrassed that no one dared look up, and the courage of the young ladies having failed them long ago, the priest had only one countenance to speak to,

and that was Ödegaard's, who meanwhile was enjoying the most blissful composure.

"But now," continued the priest, "now that I have become better acquainted with him, the result is that I am not sure that *she* is worthy of *him*, so much has he grown in my estimation. The groom's name is Art, the great Histrionic Art, and his betrothed is Petra, my foster-daughter, my beloved child. May your union be a happy one! I tremble at the thought, but what God has joined together let not man put asunder. The Lord be with you, my daughter!"

In a trice Petra had crossed the floor and thrown herself into the priest's arms.

As none of the guests resumed their seats, they all, of course, left the table. But Petra approached Ödegaard, who led her away to the farthest window-corner. He had something he would say to her, but she would not let him speak before she had said, —

"To you I owe it all!"

"No, Petra!" he answered; "I have only acted the part of a good brother. It was wrong of me to wish to become more; for had that happened your whole career would have been a failure."

"Ödegaard!"

They were holding each other's hands, but their eyes did not meet. After a little while he let go of her hands and turned away. But she threw herself upon a chair and wept.

The next day Ødegaard left the parsonage.

Toward spring Petra received a large letter, bearing a huge official seal. It frightened her, and she took it to the priest, who opened and read it. It was from the mayor of her native town, and its contents were as follows : —

“Pedro Ohlsen, who died yesterday, left the following will : —

“‘The property which I leave, of which there is a complete inventory in my account book, which will be found in the blue chest which stands in my room in the house of Gunlaug Aamundsdatter near the mountain, to which room the aforesaid Gunlaug has the key, and she alone is acquainted with the whole matter, — I hereby bequeath (provided the said Gunlaug Aamundsdatter gives her consent, which she cannot do unless she permits that the condition herewith inclosed and which she alone, as the only one who knows the facts, can perform, be fulfilled) to Jomfru Petra, the daughter of the aforesaid Gunlaug Aamunds-

datter, provided said Jomfru Petra thinks it worth while to remember an old, sick man, to whom she has been kind, though she was not aware of it, for it was not possible for her to know it, and to whom she has been a joy in his closing years, wherefore he has deemed it proper to do her a small favor in return, which he trusts she will not despise. May God be merciful to me a poor sinner!

PEDRO OHLSEN.'

"I therefore take the liberty of inquiring whether you will apply directly to your mother in regard to this matter or whether you wish to have me attend to the business for you."

The next day brought a letter from Petra's mother, written by the priest Ødegaard, the only person to whom she could confide these matters. The letter stated that she gave her consent and fulfilled the required condition, which was that she should inform Petra of Pedro's relation to her.

These tidings and the bequest awakened peculiar emotions in Petra's breast. It seemed as if all her hopes and aspirations were now to be realized. It was another indication that her time for leaving the parsonage was near at hand.

Thus old Per Olsen had fiddled at weddings and dances, Per Olsen and his son and grandson had in various ways toiled and labored, for the purpose of aiding Petra in her career as an artist. The sum was not large, but it was sufficient to give her a start in the world and hasten her progress.

Like a ray of sunshine into her mind came the thought that now her mother could come and live with her. She would now be able to be a joy to her mother every day and thus atone for all the sorrow she had caused her! She sent her a long letter by every mail, and could hardly wait for the answer. When it came it proved a great disappointment, for Gunlaug thanked her, but thought it would be better for "each to remain in her respective place." The priest now promised to write, and when Gunlaug received his letter she could no longer resist their entreaties. She had to tell her guests and acquaintances that her daughter was to be something great somewhere, and that she had sent for her to come and live with her. This turned the matter into a very important subject of gossip in the town. It was discussed on the piers, in the ships, and in every kitchen. Gunlaug, who up to this time had never mentioned her daughter, henceforth talked of noth

ing else than "my daughter Petra," and no one henceforth talked on any other topic to Gunlaug.

The time for Petra's departure was drawing near, but Gunlaug had not yet given a decisive answer, and this was a source of great trouble to the daughter. On the other hand, she received a solemn promise from the priest and Signe, that they would both come to the city and be present at her first appearance on the stage.

The snow was beginning to disappear from the mountains, and the meadows were gradually growing green. The life which is awakened by the coming of spring in the fields among the mountains is as full of energy as the longing was deep. The people become more elastic in their walk; they do their work with more alacrity, and their hearts are filled with a longing to travel and find out what there is beyond the lofty mountains that shut them in on every side. Although Petra, too, was filled with yearning, she still loved the place and everything in it more than ever now that she was to leave. It seemed as though she had neglected her surroundings heretofore, as though she now for the first time appreciated their

beauties. Having only a few days left to remain, she and Signe walked about, bidding adieu to everybody and everything, and taking a parting look at the places which had become so endeared to them. Then it was announced to them by a peasant that Ødegaard was up at the Øygards and that he was about to come down and pay them a visit. The announcement greatly excited both the girls, and they ceased their rambling walks in the neighborhood.

But when Ødegaard came he was more cheerful and happy than he had ever been seen before. His errand in the parish was to open a popular high school and to manage it himself in the early stages until he secured a suitable teacher. Later he designed to set other projects afoot. In this way he would pay, he said, a part of his father's debt to the parish, and his father had promised to come and live with him as soon as the school building was finished. Both the priest and Signe were more than pleased with this accession to the neighborhood. Petra, too, felt happy, but still it seemed strange to her that he should take up his abode in the place just as she was leaving it forever.

It was the priest's desire that they together should celebrate the Holy Communion the day

before Petra's departure. Thus a quiet solemnity pervaded the last days of her stay, and when they talked it was in a subdued tone. All seemed imbued with this sentiment, and Petra spoke with emotions of profound seriousness, as her eyes rested for the last time upon the scenes around her. Thoughts of her past experiences crowded into her mind. She was making up her account with her former self. Hitherto she had never looked into the past, but only into the future. Now her whole life stood before her from her childhood up to the present moment; the first enchanting Spanish ballads again sounded in her ears; the many mistakes she had made and all the confused aspirations of her childhood and youth were one by one taken up and reviewed, just as one would examine old patterns. If there was anything she happened to forget there would be something at hand to serve as a reminder; for each object was in her mind closely associated with some thought or other. Especially did the piano recall a number of associations that almost overwhelmed her. She would sit down by it without being able to play a note, and if Signe played she could scarcely remain in the room. She was happiest when alone. This Ødegaard and Signe understood, and respected

her feelings. Everybody regarded her with a sad kindness, and the priest never passed her during these days without stroking her hair.

At length the day came. The atmosphere was hazy and the sky was half covered with clouds. The snow was melting on the mountains and the fields were growing more and more green. The four persons remained each in his own room until the hour came for them to go together to the church. Besides them there was no one present except the deacon and a priest who had been invited to officiate, as Signe's father was to partake of the Holy Communion. But the latter had determined to preach the communion sermon himself, for he had some words of encouragement to say to his foster-child, whom he was soon to lose. He spoke as he was wont when they on some birthday or church festival were sitting at his own table. Time would soon show, he said, whether the period which she now was closing in prayer to God for mercy had laid a good foundation for her future. No person becomes perfectly true in all his relations before he has found his right calling. Hers was a teacher's calling, and he who labored earnestly and honestly and preserved his character free from stain, would reap the greatest and most lasting harvest. It

was true, he said, that God also often employed unworthy instruments; and in a higher sense we were all unworthy; but He accomplished his ends by making use of our aspirations and desires. There was, however, one kind of teaching which no man could find in his desires alone, and he hoped she would try to attain to it; we must all aim at the highest and greatest perfection. He gave her a most cordial invitation to come and visit them often, for the very object of Christian fellowship is that it shall help and strengthen our faith. If she should stray from the right path she would be most apt to find compassion in her old home, and should she be unable to understand her mistake, they would be able to warn her with more affection than anybody else.

After partaking of the sacrament they returned as they had come, and the remainder of the day each one spent in solitude; but Petra and Signe sat much of the night together in Petra's room.

The next day Petra was ready for her journey. At the parting meal the priest bade her the most tender farewell. He agreed, he said, with her friend in this, that she ought to begin her career with the preparation she now had, and begin *alone*. In the struggle which was

before her she would find how good it is to know that in one spot on earth there was a small band on whom she could with certainty rely. Only to feel sure that she was constantly remembered in their prayers, — she would find how much help there is in that.

After thus taking leave of Petra he addressed a word of welcome to Ødegaard. To be united in love in a common work was, he remarked, the most beautiful beginning of mutual affection. By this toast the priest surely did not have in his mind that which in his words brought the blush first to Signe's cheeks and then to Petra's. Whether Ødegaard turned red in the face, they did not know, for neither dared look at him.

But when the horses stood before the door, and the three friends had formed a circle about the young girl, while all the servants were gathered around the carriage, Petra whispered, as she for the last time embraced Signe, —

“I know that I soon shall hear important news from you. May God bless you!”

An hour later she saw only the snow-capped mountain-tops, which pointed out to her where the parsonage stood.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE evening just before Christmas all the tickets were sold for the performance at the theatre of the capital. A new actress, whose name was in everybody's mouth, was to make her *début*. She was a product of the people, her mother being a poor fisher-woman. By the help of strangers, who had discovered her talents, she had attained her present position, and she was said to be a genius of great promise. Many strange things were whispered among the audience before the curtain rose. Rumor had it that she had been a terribly wild girl, and that after she was grown up she had betrothed herself to six young men at the same time and had kept up the engagements with all of them for six months. Indeed, the town had been mad with excitement on her account, and she had been escorted out of it by the police. It was very strange that the managers of the theatre would permit such a person to appear. Others insisted that there was not a particle of truth in these reports. Since she was ten years

old she had lived in the quiet family of a priest in the Bergen diocese. She was a charming young woman of culture and refinement; they were well acquainted with her and knew that she must have remarkable talent, for she was so beautiful.

Others sat there who were better informed. First among these was Yngve Vold, a wholesale dealer in fish, whose name was well known throughout the country. He had happened to come to the capital to look after his business, but some people said that his hot-tempered Spanish wife made his house so warm for him that he had to travel to get cool. Now he had taken the largest box in the theatre alone and had invited some of his chance acquaintances at the hotel table to go with him and witness "some strange deviltry." He was in the very best of humor until he discovered — could it possibly be he? — in a box in the second tier and surrounded by a whole crew of sailors — no! yes! — yes, indeed, it was Gunnar Ask! — Gunnar Ask, who, with the help of his mother's money, had become the owner and captain of *The Norse Constitution*. While sailing out of the fjord he had happened to come alongside of a ship called *The Danish Constitution*; and when Gunnar thought he observed

that it tried to pass him, he made up his mind that such a thing could not be tolerated. He stretched every stitch of canvas he had; it made the timbers creak in the old Constitution, and the result was that in his efforts to scud before the wind as long as possible, he very unexpectedly ran his vessel aground. Now he was involuntarily detained in the city while his vessel was being calked. One day he had met Petra in town. She had overtaken him on the street and had been so very kind to him both then and afterwards, that he not only forgot the grudge he bore her, but declared himself the most stupid codfish his native town had ever exported, that *he* had ever been so foolish as to think that he was worthy of such a girl as Petra. To-day he had purchased at a premium tickets for himself and for his whole crew, and he was sitting there, resolving to treat the latter between every act. The sailors, who were all from Petra's native town, and ranked among her mother's most welcome guests, — an earthly paradise her tavern was to them, — felt Petra's honor to be their own, and as they sat there they promised each other that they would applaud in a style that would astonish the audience.

But down in the parquet was seen the thick

bristly hair of the priest. He was calm; for he had intrusted Petra's cause into the hands of a Greater One. By his side sat Signe, now Mrs. Ødegaard. Her husband, Petra, and herself had just returned from a three months' trip abroad. She looked happy as she sat turned toward Ødegaard with a smiling face; for between them sat an old lady with snow-white hair, which encircled her sun-burnt countenance like a silver crown. She was taller than all those about her, and could be seen by every one in the audience, and it was not long before all the opera-glasses were directed toward her, for it was said that she was the mother of the young actress. She, whose name was a man's,¹ made so great an impression on the audience, that it reflected honor and credit on the daughter and thus aided the latter in gaining the good-will of the spectators in advance. A young people is full of anticipation. It has faith in its native powers, and thus the sight of the mother awakened the confidence of the audience in the daughter.

Gunlaug was oblivious to everything about her. She cared but little for the performance. What she wanted was to see whether the public were kind to her daughter.

¹ Gunlaug is frequently a man's name in Norway.

Time passed. The conversation died away in the expectation that gradually deepened and increased as the hour for beginning drew nearer.

A lively flourish of drums, trumpets, and brass instruments at once introduced the overture. "Axel and Valborg,"¹ by Adam Oehlenschläger, was to be played, and Petra had herself requested this overture. She sat behind the scenes and listened. But before the curtain sat as many of her countrymen as the house could hold, trembling for her, as we always do when the first step is to be taken where we look for a grand revelation from some one we hold dear.

Each one felt as if he were the one that was to make his own *début*. In such moments many prayers rise to heaven, even from hearts that seldom pray.

The overture was drawing to a close. Peace.

¹ "Axel and Valborg" was the tragedy Petra heard the first time she went to the theatre. (See chapter vii., where the overture is described.) One version of this popular Scandinavian legend will be found in the ballad of "Axel and Walborg," which appears in Alexander Prior's *Ancient Danish Ballads* (vol. ii. p. 247); another in Robert Buchanan's *Scandinavian Ballad Stories* (pp. 117-159); a third in Oehlenschläger's tragedy, "Axel og Valborg;" and a fourth in George Houghton's charming narrative poem entitled *The Legend of St. Olaf's Kirk*, recently published in a revised edition by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. — Tm.

pervaded the harmonies, and they gradually dissolved as into sunlight.

The overture closed. Anxious silence ensued.

Then the curtain rose !

LATER SKETCHES.

BLAKKEN.¹

BJÖRGAN was in former times the parsonage of the parish of Kvikne, in the Dovrechain. It was situated far up the mountain, quite by itself. As a little boy, I often stood on the table in the family sitting-room, and gazing down into the valley, watched with wistful eyes those who in winter skimmed along the river on skates, or in summer sported on the green. Björgan lay so high that grain would not grow there, and therefore the gard was sold to a Swiss traveler, and a parsonage purchased in the valley, where the conditions are certainly somewhat better. The coming of winter at Björgan was sorrowfully early! A field, which father had sowed by way of experiment one warm, early spring, lay one morning covered with snow; the mown hay was in quite as great danger from a snow-storm as from a heavy fall of rain; and when winter overtook us the cold

¹ The name usually given to a dun-colored horse.

was so great that I dared not take hold of the latch of the street door, lest my fingers should freeze fast to the iron. My father, who was born in that part of the country, near Randsfjord, and was thus well hardened to the climate, was, nevertheless, often compelled to wear a mask over his face when he drove to the distant sub-parish. The road creaked and groaned when one person came walking along, and beneath the footsteps of several it gave forth a sharp, shrill sound. Snow often lay on a level with the second story of the large building, while the smaller outhouses were entirely buried in it; hills, shrubbery, and fences were smoothed away, a sea of snow was spread around, with the tops of the tall birch-trees floating on its smooth surface, or it was lashed into billowy undulations by a storm which had here made hollows, there drifts. I stood on the table and saw the swift runners on snow-shoes faring away from us, down toward the valley. I saw the Lapps come whizzing down the mountains from the Röraas forest, with their reindeers, and up the slope toward us. Their pulkhas swayed to and fro, in the swift flight; and I shall never forget the moment when the party would finally draw up in our farm-yard, and a ball of fur would creep out of each pulkha and

would prove to be a busy, cheery, little mortal, who sold reindeer meat.

The Kvikne dalesmen of latter days have developed into an enlightened, clever people ; but at that time the Kvikne charge stood in worse repute than any other in the country. At not so very remote a date, a priest of that locality was obliged to carry pistols with him to church ; another returned home from his churchward trip and found all his furniture cut to pieces and destroyed, by men whose faces had been blackened, and who had almost frightened the life out of his wife, who was at home alone. The last priest had fled from the parish, and had positively refused to return. The charge had been without a pastor for many years, when father — perhaps just for that reason — was called to it, for he was considered capable of keeping a boat still against wind and storm.

I still remember distinctly how, one Saturday morning, I was in the act of creeping up-stairs to the study, on hands and feet, because there was a coating of ice on the steps after the scrubbing, and had not proceeded very far when a crash and din from the study drove me down again in terror. For one of the champions of the parish had undertaken up there to teach the refractory priest the ways of the people,

and had found to his dismay that the priest was resolved to teach him first his own. He made his exit from the door in such a manner that he came tumbling all the way down to the bottom of the stairs, and then gathering up his limbs, he reached the street door in four bounds. The people of Kvikne knew no better than to suppose that the priest gave them the laws that came from the Storting. They wanted to forbid him to carry out the school laws; so, putting my father to defiance, they assembled in great force at the meeting of the school board, in order to hinder its actions with violence. In spite of mother's earnest prayers, father had repaired thither, and as no one else had ventured to aid him with the apportionment of the school districts, etc., he did it himself, according to his best judgment, amidst the thundering menaces of the crowd; but when, with the register under his arm, he went out from the assembly, they all gave way, and not a finger was laid on him. My mother's rejoicing can readily be imagined when she saw him driving home as calm as ever.

Under such circumstances and surroundings Blakken was born! His mother was a large red mare from Gudbrandsdale, the delight of every one who saw her; his sire was a madcap

of a black fjord horse, who, one fine day, in a strange locality through which they were carelessly passing with the mare, burst whinnying out of the forest, and bounding over fences and ditches, came and took what was his own by the right of love. Of Blakken it was early said: "This will become the strongest horse that has ever been seen here in the North;" and accustomed as I was to stories about champions and fights, I looked on the little foal as a very highly-gifted comrade. He was, however, not always good to me. I still bear a scar over the right eye, the work of his hoof; nevertheless, I devoted myself with unwavering fidelity to both mare and foal, slept with them in the fields, and rolled between the mare's legs when the foal was feeding. But once I went too far with them. The day was warm; I had fallen asleep inside of a woodland barn whose door stood invitingly open, and where we had doubtless all sought shade; the mare and the foal had wandered farther, but I remained lying there. It was late in the day when those who had been calling and searching for me in vain came home with the tidings that I was nowhere to be found. The reader can imagine the alarm of my parents; every one joined in the search, went shouting through field and

wood, carefully examined hills and precipices; until at last a child was heard crying in a barn, and I was found sitting on the hay. I was so frightened that I could not speak; for a black animal had been standing looking at me with eyes of fire. Whether I had dreamed this or actually experienced it, it would not be easy to say; certain it is, though, that even a few years ago I once awoke with this animal standing over me.

Blakken and I soon had playfellows: first a little dog that taught me to steal sugar, then a cat that one day made its appearance in the kitchen. I had never seen a cat before, and, pale as a corpse, I rushed into the sitting-room, screaming that a large mouse had come up from the cellar! The next spring our numbers were still further increased by the addition of a little pig; and then as often as Blakken accompanied his mother when she went about her work, the dog, the cat, the pig, and I came trooping after. We managed to kill time pretty successfully, especially by taking naps together. Indeed, I shared with these playfellows everything I liked myself: thus I once carried a silver spoon out to the pig, in order that it might eat nicer; and it tried, too, that is to say, to eat the silver spoon. When I

accompanied my parents down to the valley to see people, the dog, the cat, and the pig went along. The first two were taken into the ferry-boat that was to carry us across the river, the pig, with a little grunt, then swam after us. We were treated to refreshments, each to suit his taste, and in the evening we went home again in the same manner.

But soon it was my fate to lose these comrades and retain only Blakken; for my father was called to the parish Næsset in Romsdal. It was a memorable day when we set forth, we children and a nurse-maid stowed away in a little house, secured firmly on a long sledge, that neither wind nor snow might assail us, and my father and mother in a double sleigh in front of us, surrounded by a group of people who wanted to say farewell over and over again. I cannot say that I was especially sorrowful; for I was only six years old, and I knew that at Trondhjem there was to be bought for me a hat and coat and trousers that I was to put on when we got to our journey's end! And there, in our new home, I was to see the sea for the first time! And then, too, Blakken was with us.

Here at the Næsset parsonage, one of the finest guards in the country, lying broad-breasted

between two arms of the fjord, with green mountains above and cataracts and gards on the opposite shore, with undulating fields and eager life in the heart of the valley, and out along the fjord mountains, from which naze after naze, with a large gard on each, project out into the water, — here at the Næsset parsonage, where I could stand of evenings and watch the play of the sun over mountain and fjord until I wept as if I had done something wrong; and where on my snow-shoes, down in some valley or other, I could suddenly pause, as one spell-bound by a beauty, a yearning, which I was powerless to explain, but which was so great that I felt the most exalted joy as well as the most oppressive sense of imprisonment and grief; here at the Næsset parsonage my impressions grew, and one of the liveliest of these was that made on me by Blakken; for here he, also, grew. He became a hero, and did heroic work.

He was not very tall, but was extremely long in proportion to his height, and of a breadth that called forth an involuntary smile in the beholder; he was of a dun hue, rather inclined to the yellow than the white, with a black, extraordinarily full mane, he became a heavy good-natured beast — in his every-day work, al

ways hanging his head. His accustomed duties he performed as calmly as an ox, but most effectually. In addition to accomplishing more than half the horse-labor of the farming, wood-hauling, etc., on this very inconvenient gard, he did more than half the labor of hauling materials for a large, new main house and for the many additional buildings my father erected besides, and hauled it from a far-distant, awful forest. Where two horses could not pull the load, Blakken was used, and if the harness held he would bring it through. He liked to look over his shoulder at the boys while they piled on his double and triple load; of course he had not much to say about it, but he had to be told to go three or four times before he would heed the order, and even, then, he always first made a few trial pulls, — and then he started. He took his time, step by step. Sometimes there came a new servant who wanted to practice him in a swifter pace, but it always ended by the boy's learning the horse's gait. The lash was never used; for the powerful laborer soon became so dearly beloved that he was managed entirely by caresses. As Blakken gradually became renowned in the parishes, it came to be an honor, indeed, to drive him.

For Blakken was soon beyond compare the

greatest wonder of the diocese. It began, as is always the case when anything great starts up, with terrible uproar and hatred; it began, namely, by Blakken, who went out in the forest and on the mountain among the other horses of the parish, insisting on claiming all the mares for himself. He so severely bruised and gashed his rival suitors, who fancied that they could compete with him, that the peasants came rushing down to the parsonage with solemn imprecations and demands for damages. They thought it best, however, to have patience, when they saw that they would be indemnified under all circumstances; for Blakken's offspring did him honor! Still, it was for a long time a source of annoyance that his superiority was so immense and indisputable. Our neighbor, the lieutenant, could not, as a soldier, submit to this; he secured two heavily-built Gudbrands-dale horses, splendid animals, — and they were to teach Blakken respect. There were many wagers laid for and against; and how excited we were about the issue of the first encounter in the spring, up in the mountain-pasture! I shall, therefore, never forget the beautiful Whitsun evening when, as I stood out of doors listening to the black-grouse that were frolicking on the slope, a girl came run-

ning up and announced that both of the lieutenant's horses were standing close by the grindstone, near at hand, pressed up against each other. All hastened to the spot; and lo! the two superb animals stood trembling there, with blood streaming from wound after wound, — they had been under Blakken's monstrous hoofs and teeth! Terror had endowed them with strength to leap over the high picket fence of the parsonage; for they had not dared to pause before they had reached the house. The next day Blakken's praise was sounded along the church wall and was borne from there over mountain and strand.

Blakken had the sorrow of having one of his own sons, a spirited brown horse, share his sway with him for some years. He caught him in the midst of his first revolt, and as this audacious son would not take flight, but sent forth a challenging war-cry, the tried champion raised himself; they approached each other on their hind legs, threw their fore legs round each other's necks and wrestled. (Stallions always fight in this way.) Soon the young madcap described the arc of a violin bow; shortly after he lay crushed on the ground, and received his paternal chastisement. This I myself witnessed.

Almost every summer there were bears in the woods that killed many cows and sheep both for us and others. We were constantly startled by hearing the herd-boys halloo and the shepherd dogs bay ; then the bells would ring, and the working people hasten to assemble and start for the woods with guns, axes, and iron bars ; but as a rule their coming would be too late : either the dog would already have driven away the bear, or else the cattle had been stricken down ere help arrived. The horses could better defend themselves ; but it happened now and then that the bear killed a horse, either by luring him into a swamp, where the horse sank and became an easy victim, or by getting him started on a race, so that he would plunge over a cliff.

One summer things were especially bad ; there was scarcely a week that the bear did not attack our cattle ; the horses would suddenly make their appearance close by the cattle pen, in a state of frantic alarm ; for every time they had been chased by the bear. But Blakken, with the mare and the foal, which he with his sharp shoes held guard over, never came. We were in despair at last to know what had happened to them ; the herd-boys had not heard the mare's bell for many days. As there had

been a long-continued storm, during which the horses are apt to seek shelter near home, indeed often to station themselves just outside of the inclosure leading to the stable, and still they had not come, the boys were sent up into the woods in strong force in quest of them. They searched chiefly about the marshy lands, to see whether the bear might not have enticed thither the combat-loving horse, and thus overcome him and afterwards perhaps have taken both the foal and the mare, which naturally would have defended the foal. They sought and sought without detecting anything suspicious; the bear's footsteps (tracks as they are called) were everywhere to be seen, but no sign of any fight with a horse. As the boys walked on talking of this, and approached one of the finest grazing-grounds in the whole forest, one of them observed that just in the vicinity of a swamp there were tracks of the foal and the mare, but that they had been going round and round without stopping in the same circle, consequently in great alarm, and that this had happened recently, probably that same day. Upon examining the marsh they found truly enough that it had been torn up by the feet in a great fight. The boys began to feel hot and cold in turn, but they were determined to examine into

the matter more thoroughly. On the brink of the swamp they saw traces of the hind feed both of bear and horse; they must then have both drawn themselves up at once, while the bear walked backward out in the swamp, in order to mislead the horse, and the latter followed; for the swamp can easily uphold the broad paw and calf of the bear; because he is not as heavy as the horse, who quickly sinks in and is caught there. But this time the bear had miscalculated; for although Blakken had sunk in pretty badly, the gigantic strength of his loins had sufficed to raise his legs from the mire of the swamp, while the sharp-shod fore-feet beat, and the sharp teeth tore, and soon there could be found no further traces of the bear's hind-feet, but, on the other hand, an exact impression of his furry hide, and this was repeated over and over again through the whole swamp. He had been thrown down, had not been able to pick himself up again, but had turned over, and rolled round and round, in order to protect himself from the blows and bites of the infuriated horse, and this could be traced all the way to firm land. Inflamed by the exciting story of the battle-field, the hearing of the boys became sharpened, their sight more keen, and now in the still atmosphere, all glit-

tering with sunbeams after the rainy weather, they could hear the mare's bell from the leafy wood at the foot of the ridge. They hastened thither, but were met by Blakken who with flashing eyes forbade them to come nearer. He was scarcely to be recognized. With head thrown back and floating mane, he was trotting round the mare and the foal in a large circle, and it was only after much kind talk and with the aid of salt, which they carried with them, that they could get him to recognize that these were friends who had come.

Now this, Blakken's great achievement, which was unique of its kind, threw such a halo about the animal's name that from being known as "the priest's Blakken," he was promoted to the title "Bear Blakken." Time upon time, year after year, he had his wrestles with the bear, and each time was long uncontrollable. He once came home bearing marks of the bear's claws; the fight had been with an old warrior who had seized the horse below the eyes, and had made terrible gashes there when Blakken had torn his head loose. To have such a fierce old stallion going sharp-shod about the woods and pastures was extremely dangerous; but the horses knew him and fled at his approach, and even if now and then one would be stupid

enough to allow himself to get a thrashing, people were inclined to be forbearing with Blakken, on account of his great fame. A horse who could throw the bear to the ground might be allowed to do pretty much as he pleased.

How greatly admired he was could best be seen when we were obliged, as seldom happened, to employ him as a church horse. If the whole family with the governess and tutor wanted to drive to church, he had to draw three or four of us in an old gig, in which one sat "not merely for pleasure." As none of the ordinary harnesses were large enough for him, he had to hobble along in his working gear, and as his heavy bristling mane fell over his eyes, he did not look exactly suitable for a trip to church. He had to be put in the rear of the party; for in the first place he would not trot, but would only take the gait suitable for a working cart, and, in the second place, he wanted to carry the church-going people into all the woodland paths he was accustomed to tread. But if he went in the rear, he did to a certain extent as the others did; when the other horses trotted, Blakken plunged forward, and so those who sat in the gig were borne onward at a hobbling jerking pace, or as in a

heavy sea, and on one occasion were actually made sea-sick. At church, on the other hand, there was an entire change. There were a great many other horses there, and throwing back his head he would send forth a veritable war-whoop. It would be answered from the fields round about, and off he would start with the gig, but would be held back, unharnessed, and tethered. He had his own special tether along, and was always tied in a place close to the foot of the mountain, in order to be as far as possible from the other horses. But if he wanted to join them, he would tug at his tether and raise himself on his hind legs, and send a long whinny down the slope. A larger number of people gathered about him than were seated in church; when he had been quiet a while, they would pat him, measure his breast, his neck, his hips, would take him by the mouth, in order to examine his jaws; but as soon as one of the other horses neighed, he would tear himself away from his admirers, start up and reply; this seemed to all beholders the noblest sight they had ever seen. I for my part have certainly never since been so proud of anything as I was in those days of Blakken, when I stood among the peasants, and listened to their loud resounding words of praise.

And here, at the summit of his triumphal career, let me leave him. I went forth into the world and found other goals for my admiration and other heroes to follow.

FIDELITY.

YONDER on the plains in my native parish, there dwelt a husband and wife with their six sons. They toiled faithfully on a very large but hitherto neglected gard, until an accidental wound from an axe ended the husband's days, and the wife was left alone with the hard work and the six children. She did not lose her courage, but led her eldest two sons forward to the side of the coffin, and made them promise her over their father's corpse to care for their little brothers and sisters, and to be a help to her as far as God gave them strength. They promised, and they kept their word until the youngest son was confirmed. Then they considered themselves released from their pledge; the eldest married the widow of a gardman, and the next to the eldest shortly afterward married her well-to-do sister.

The four brothers who remained at home were to have the entire management, after

having until now been continually under control themselves. They did not feel much ambition for this; from childhood up they had been accustomed to keep together, either in couples or all four, and did so more than ever now that they must depend solely on one another for help. Not one of them would state his own opinion about anything until he felt sure of that of the others; indeed they were not certain of their own opinions until they had looked into one another's faces. Without having made any compact, there was still a mute agreement among them, that they would never separate as long as their mother lived.

She herself, however, preferred to have things somewhat differently arranged, and got the two who had already left home to agree with her. The gard had become a well-tilled piece of land; more help was needed, and so the mother proposed to pay the eldest two for their portion, and divide the gard among the four sons at home, in such a way that they would keep together in couples, each couple occupying half of the gard. There should be erected a new set of houses alongside of the old ones; two of the sons should take possession of them; the other two should remain with her. But of the couple that left home, one must

marry; for they would need help about the house and the cattle; and the mother named the girl whom she would like to have for a daughter-in-law.

None of them had any objections to offer, but now the question arose, which two should move away, and of these two, which one should marry? The eldest of the four said that he was quite willing to leave home, but he would never marry; and each of the others in turn objected.

Finally they agreed with the mother that the girl should be allowed to decide the matter. And up at the summer stable one evening the mother asked her if she would be willing to come to the plains as a wife, and the girl proved to be quite willing. Well, then, which of the boys would she like to marry; for she could have whichever one she pleased. Why, she had not considered the matter. Then she must do so now, for it was left to her to decide. Well, then, she supposed it might be the eldest; but him, she was told, she could not have; he was not willing. Then the girl named the youngest. But the mother thought there would be something strange in that; "for he was the youngest."

"Then the next to the youngest!"

"Why not the next to the eldest?"

"To be sure, why not the next to the eldest?" replied the girl; for he was the one she had been thinking of the whole time, therefore had not dared name him.

Now the mother had judged, from the moment the eldest had refused, that this must be because he thought the next to the eldest and the girl had an eye on each other. So the next to the eldest married the girl, and the eldest moved with him into the new home. How the gard was now divided no outsider could learn, for the brothers worked together as they had done before, and they stored away their harvest, now in one barn, now in the other.

After a time the mother's health began to fail; she needed rest, consequently, help, and the sons agreed to engage permanently a girl who was in the habit of working here. The youngest brother was to ask the girl the next day they were gathering leaves; he knew her best. Now the youngest must for some time have had a secret liking for this girl; for when he came to speak to her he did it in such a singular manner that she thought he was asking her to marry him, and she said, "Yes." The youth was frightened, and going at once to his

brothers told them what a mistake had been made. They all four became very grave, and none of them dared utter the first word. But the next to the youngest could see that the youngest really cared for the girl, and that was the reason why he was so frightened. At the same time he saw clearly that it was his own lot to be a bachelor ; for if the youngest should marry he could not. This seemed to him rather hard, for there was one of whom he himself had thought ; but now nothing could come of that. It was *he*, then, who made the first remark, namely, that they would be surer of the girl if she should come to the gard as the wife of one of them. Always when one had spoken the others agreed, and the brothers now went to talk with their mother. But when they got home they found their mother ill in earnest ; they must wait until she was well ; and as she did not become well again, they once more held counsel together. In it the youngest proposed that as long as the mother lay in bed no change must be made, and this was agreed to ; for the girl must have no more to care for than the mother. Thus it remained.

For sixteen years the mother lay in bed.
For sixteen years the intended daughter-in-law

waited on her patiently and without a murmur. For sixteen years the sons met every evening for devotions at her bedside, and on Sundays the eldest two also joined them. She often begged them in these peaceful hours to remember her who had tended her ; they understood what she meant by this, and promised. During all these sixteen years she blessed her illness, because it had allowed her to taste a mother's joy to the last ; she thanked them every time they gathered about her bedside, — and one day this was for the last time.

When she was dead her six sons met to bear her themselves to the grave. It was customary here for women as well as men to attend funerals, and this time the whole parish followed, men and women, all who were able to walk, even the children ; — first the deacon, as leader of the singing, then the six sons with the coffin, and then a long train of people, all singing so that they were heard more than a mile away. And when the body was laid to rest, and the six sons had filled the grave, the whole procession repaired to the church, for there the youngest son was to be married ; the brothers would have it so, because this funeral and wedding really belonged together. Here the priest, who was my now deceased father, spoke so eloquently of fidelity that I. who

chanced to be present, thought when I came out of church that it was something that belonged with the mountains and the sea and the grandeur of the entire surrounding nature.

9



A PROBLEM OF LIFE.

"WHY shall we sit down here?"

"Because it is high and light."

"But there is an awful precipice here; it makes me giddy, and the sun glares on the water. Let us go farther!"

"No; no farther."

"Then let us go back to the green glen; it was so beautiful there."

"Oh, no; not there either," and he sank down as though he could not or would not keep up longer.

She remained standing, with her eyes fixed intently on him.

Finally he said, "Aasta, you must now explain to me why you were so afraid of the foreign skipper who came in at twilight."

"Was not that what I thought," she whispered, and acted as though she wanted to run away.

"You must tell me this before you go, else I will not follow you."

"Botolf!" she exclaimed, and turned round, but did not stir from the spot.

"It is true, I have promised you not to ask," said he. "I will keep my word, too, if you prefer to have it so; but in that case it is all over between us."

Now she burst into tears, and walked right up in front of him. Her delicate little figure, her soft, light hair, from which the kerchief had fallen back, and then her eyes and mouth, — each strikingly individual and yet combined now in one expression; the sun was shining full upon her. He sprang to his feet.

"Ah, you know very well when you look thus at me, I always yield. But I have now also learned that it is only worse afterward. Cannot you understand this: if I promise you a hundred times not to want to know your past, I can have no peace. I cannot endure it!"

His face, too, bore traces of a suffering that did not date from yesterday.

"Botolf, that was just what you promised me, at the time when you would never let me have peace, you promised me to let it all rest, all that I could never, never tell you. You promised me this solemnly; you said that it made no difference to you; that it was only

me you wanted! Botolf!" — and she sank down on her knees in the heather in front of him; she wept as though her life were in peril; she gazed at him, while tear after tear continued to speak for her, and she was the most beautiful and most unhappy being he had ever in his life beheld.

"God have mercy on me," said he, as he rose, but sat down again at once; "if you loved me enough to place confidence in me, how happy we two might be together!"

"And if you could only have a little confidence in me," she besought, drawing nearer to him on her knees, and then she continued: "Love you? That night when I came up on deck, after our ship had run against yours, you stood by the shrouds, giving orders. I had never seen anything so strong. I loved you at once! And when you carried me over into the boat while the ship was sinking, I felt a desire for life again, and that I had thought I never more should feel."

She ceased speaking, and she wept; but presently she clasped her hands on his knee. "Botolf!" she implored, "be great; be magnanimous, as you were that time when you took me, without anything else, — only me! — Botolf!"

Almost harshly, he replied, "Why do you tempt me? You know very well I cannot! It is the soul we want; it is not this. In the first days it is all very well, but not afterwards!"

She drew back, and said, hopelessly, "Oh, no! {A life can never become whole again.} Oh, my God!" Then she burst into tears.

"Give me your whole life, and not merely a fragment of it! and then it shall become whole again in my keeping!" He spoke with emphasis, as though to put courage into her; she made no reply, but he saw that she was undergoing a struggle. "Conquer yourself! Have courage! Worse than it is now, it cannot possibly be!"

"You can drive ~~me to the worst!~~" she wailed. He ~~misunderstood~~ her, and continued: "Even if it proved to be the greatest crime, I shall try to bear it; but this I cannot bear."

"No, nor I either!" she cried, and rose.

"I will help you!" he rose too, as he spoke; "every single day I will help you, if I but know what it is. But I am too proud to be the keeper of something I do not know—and which may perhaps belong to another!"

Here she grew flaming red. "For shame!" she cried. "Of us two, I am the prouder. I do

not offer what belongs to another Now you may cease!"

"Ah, if you are proud, take away my suspicion!"

"Good Lord, I can endure this no longer!"

"No, I have sworn that *this day* shall bring the end!"

"Is it not merciless," she cried, "to be willing to torment and torture a woman who has trusted herself to you, and who has prayed to be spared, as fervently as I have!" and her tears began to flow again, but with a sudden revulsion of feeling she burst out: "I understand you; you want to force that which is within me to cry aloud, so that you may thus learn something."

She looked at him resentfully and turned away. Then she heard slowly, word for word:

+ "Will you, or will you not?"

She stretched forth her hand. "Not if you were to offer me all that now lies spread before our eyes!"

She walked from him, her bosom heaving, her eyes restlessly wandering about, but chiefly seeking his face with an expression that was now hard, now agonized, now hard again. She leaned against a tree and wept, then she ceased weeping, but walked on as before.

"I knew very well that you did not love me," she heard, and in a moment was the humblest and most repentant of women.

She made several efforts to reply, but instead flung herself down on the heather and buried her face in her hands. He walked up to her and stood over her. She felt him standing there, she waited for him to speak, she covered her face, but as no words came, she grew still more frightened and had to look up. As she did so she sprang to her feet; his weather-beaten long face had become hollow, his deep eyes that were without eyebrows, his wide mouth, with its tightly compressed lips, his whole large, imposing figure, became impressed with such a concentrated, extraordinary force upon her that she suddenly saw him standing up, by the shrouds... on the night of the shipwreck. He had become as grand as he was then, and possessed of a boundless strength, but this strength was now turned against herself!

"You have lied to me, Aasta!" She retreated, but he came after her. "You have also made a liar of me; *there has not been perfect truth between us one single day of the time we have lived together!*"

He stood so near her that she could feel his warm breath; he looked right into her eyes

until she grew dizzy; she did not know what she should say or do the next moment, and so she closed her eyes. She stood as though either about to fall down or to run away — the crisis was at hand. In the profound silence that preceded it, he himself grew alarmed. Once more he assailed her:—

✱ “Give me proof! Lay aside all your arts; do it now, here!”

“Yes!” replied she, but without being conscious that she spoke.

“Do it now, here!” I say.

✱ He gave a shriek; for at this moment, she dashed past him and over the brink of the steep: he saw her fair hair, her upward stretched hand, a kerchief that floated up, got loose, and was wafted far away. He heard no scream, but his heart was torn with a very great grief. Nor did he know he had fallen to the ground.

From the sea she had come to him that night, in the sea she had disappeared, and with her the history of her life. Into the black night of the deep had plunged all that his soul possessed—should he not follow? He had come hither with the firm determination to put an end to his torment; this was no end, the end could now never come, this was only the real

beginning. Her last act shouted up to him that he had judged falsely and murdered her! Notwithstanding this the agony had increased ten-fold; he must live in order to ponder on how it had come to pass. She, who was almost the only one who was saved that terrible night, she had been rescued only to be murdered by him who had rescued her. He who had sailed home and traded as though the whole world was his, a sea and a place of business, had become the victim of a love which had destroyed both him and the object of his love. Was he wicked? Perhaps he was, but he had never felt so. What was he, then? He rose--he had to go over the precipice, he had to go down the mountain again; he would find the answer to his life the moment he had found the answer to solve.

It could never be solved. She had lived in America ever since she was grown up; she was coming from there when the ship struck. Where in America should he begin? Where she was from in Norway he did not definitely know; he was not even sure that her surname was the one her family had borne in Norway. The foreign skipper? Ah, where was he? And did he know her, or was it only she who knew him? He might as well ask the sea; to

*He must
solve the
problem*

journey away and begin an investigation was the same thing as to plunge into it.

He had been in error! One who was guilty and repentant would have eased her mind by confessing all to her husband; one who was not repentant would have sought to evade his inquiries. But she revealed nothing, nor did she seek evasion; she took refuge in death when pressed too sorely. Such courage did not belong to one who was guilty. Ah, why not? Rather death than confession; for still greater courage was needed for the latter. But she did not lack the nerve for confession; for she had certainly been confessing that there was something wrong. She could not tell him. It must be something she could not tell him. But she could not have been guilty of any great crime; for she had often been happy, indeed merry; she was passionate, but she had fine feelings and was kind-hearted. The crime must be that of another. Why, then, not say that it was that of another; for in such a case his distrust would have vanished. But if it were neither hers nor that of another, what was it, then? She herself had certainly said that there was something — and then the foreign skipper of whom she was so much afraid? What was it, what in the name of wonder could it be? Had she still lived, he

would still have continued to torment her — this thought stung him and made him wretched.

And his agonies did not cease. Perhaps she was not so guilty as she thought herself, or perhaps not so guilty as she must seem to others. How often is there not innocence behind our guilt, simplicity in sin, although so few can understand it — and *him* she had not believed capable of understanding it, because he was in a continual state of suspicion. Out of one straightforward answer he would have found occasion for a thousand suspicious questions, and therefore she had preferred to trust herself to death than to him! Why, had he never, never been able to leave her in peace? To *him* she had fled from her past, of *him* she had sought protection from it, and yet it was he who was constantly conjuring it up, and who continually let it loose upon her! She was truly devoted to him, she was affectionate and charming when with him — what then was her past to him? And if it did concern him, why had he not thought of it at first? No, according as her tenderness increased, his restlessness grew; the moment she became his, not only from admiration and gratitude, but from the heart, then he wanted to know if she had ever belonged to any one else, and what her previous life had been.

And the more it grieved her, the more she begged for mercy, the more he insisted, for he felt sure there must be something!

For the first time the thought occurred to him: had *he* told *her* everything? Was it really imperative to tell each other everything? Would all be understood as it really was? Most assuredly not.

He heard two children playing near him, and looked round. He sat in the green glen she had recently spoken of, but he was not aware of it until now. Five hours had rolled by, he thought it was but a few minutes. The children must have been playing here for some time, but he had not heard them until now. Ah! was not that Agnes, the priest's six or eight years old daughter? whom Aasta had loved to idolatry, and who was so much like her—God in Heaven; how like her she was! The child had just helped her little brother up on a stone, he was to play being in school, and she was to be the school-master.

"Now say what I say," said she. "Our Father!"

"Ou' Fath'!"

"Who art in heaven!"

"Heaven!"

"Hallowed be thy name."

"Ha'o'ed ey name."

"Thy kingdom come."

"No!"

"Thy will be done."

"No, I will not."

Botolf had stolen away walking backward; it was not the prayer which affected him, he had not even perceived at first that it was a prayer, but while he listened to and watched the children he suddenly appeared in his own eyes like a foul beast of prey, thrust out from fellowship with God and with man. Behind the bushes he retreated, that the children might not discover his presence; he was more afraid of them than he had ever been of anything in his whole life. He stole into the forest, far from the highway. Whither should he go? To the empty house he had bought and made ready for her? Or farther away? It mattered not; for wherever he could imagine himself, there she stood before him.

It is said of dying people that they have mirrored in their eyes the last thing they have seen; and he who awakens from an evil deed carries with him the first object his eyes rest on and never more becomes free from it. It was not Aasta he saw, as he had seen her lately on the heights; it was a little innocent girl—it was

16 / Agnes. Even the image of Aasta as she sank from his sight became transformed into that of the child, with its small, uplifted hands. The remembrance of Aasta's unspeakable love for the child caused the images within his soul to undergo a mysterious change, the strong likeness played into the doubt of long months as to whether Aasta was guilty or innocent. Had Aasta just such a child nature concealed within her own breast? Yes, he had seen this, or rather, he knew now for the first time that he had seen it. Until now he had merely brooded over whether hers was the expression of innocence, whether she could have smiled thus to more than one, or in what way it was she had veiled this child she bore within her heart since it only had power to burst forth in radiant moments. A continual variableness in her nature, a restlessness with perpetual exaggeration, which also led others to exaggeration, had in her life both attracted and repelled him; now after her sorrowful death, all remembrances were centred in an innocent child engaged in prayer.

|| Where thought was piteously searching for light, he met the child; this barred every avenue to investigation. Every scene in their short life together, from that night of ship-

wreck until the Sunday morning on the heights — whenever he would question it, the child's face appeared, and this singular confusion of the two so wearied him in body and mind that after the lapse of a few days he was scarcely able to take any food, and ere long he was unable to leave his bed.

Every one saw ~~that this was tending toward~~ death. (He who himself is the bearer of a problem, acquires a peculiar presence which makes him a problem to others.) From the day he took possession here, *his* gloomy silence, *her* beauty and the hidden life of both created much gossip in the parish; when the wife suddenly disappeared the excitement grew until the most incredible things were the most readily believed. No one could furnish any information, inasmuch as none of those who lived or were occupied along the sea-shore or the mountain ridges, had had a view of the heights that Sunday morning just at the moment when she had flung herself over the precipice in the sunshine. Nor did her body drift ashore to bear witness itself. There were therefore stories afloat about him, even during his lifetime. He presented an ugly appearance, as he lay there in his bed, with his long, hollow face, which was surrounded by an unbroken framework of red beard and bristling

red hair. The large eyes looked up as from a shut-in lake. As he seemed neither to want to live nor to die, it was said that there was a struggle about him between God and the devil. Some had even seen the evil one, surrounded by flames of fire, reach up to the windows of his chamber in order to call him. They had seen him sniffing around the house in the form of a black dog, or bounding in front of it like a rolling ball of wool. People who were rowing past had seen the whole gard on fire, others had heard a procession shouting, barking, laughing aloud, coming out of the sea, faring slowly toward the house, passing in through closed doors, rushing madly through all the rooms, and then with the same screaming, baying of dogs and neighing of horses, sweeping down to the sea again and there disappearing.

The servants of the sick man, men and women, left at once, and they told about all these things. No one dared go near the gard. Had not an old houseman and his wife, to whom he had been kind, now taken pity on him, he would have been left without any help. The old woman who waited on him was herself in great fear; she burned straw under his bed, in order to drive away the evil one; but although the sick man was nearly destroyed by fire, released he

was not. He lay there in terrible suffering. The old woman thought finally that there must be some one for whom he was waiting. She asked him if a message should be sent for the priest. He shook his head. Was there any one else he would like to see? To this he made no reply. The next day, as he lay on his bed, he distinctly pronounced the name "Agnes." It surely did not come as an answer to her question of the preceding day; but the old woman took it for this. Delighted, she got up from her seat, and going out to her husband begged him make haste to harness the horse and drive over to the priest's for Agnes.

At the parsonage they thought there was surely a mistake, and that it was the priest who was wanted to minister to the sick; but the old man insisted upon it that it was Agnes. The little girl herself sat within listening, and was much afraid; for she also had heard about the devil and the procession from the sea; but she had also heard that the sick man was waiting to see some one before he could die, and did not think it was strange that it should be her whom his wife had so often carried home with her. The wishes of a dying person must be fulfilled, they told Agnes, and if she prayed like a good girl to her God when no one could do her any

harm. And she believed this, and permitted herself to be dressed for the visit.

It was a cold clear evening, with long attendant shadows, the sleigh-bells were echoed through the woods, it was somewhat alarming; but Agnes sat in the sleigh and prayed, her hands clasped inside of her muff. She did not see the devil, nor did she hear the procession from the sea, along whose strand she was driving; but she saw the stars above her, and the light on the heights in front of her. Up at the gard it was ~~was~~ ^{dismally} still; but the old woman came out at once, carried her in, took off her travelling wraps, and bade her warm herself at the stove. And, meanwhile, the old woman said that she must be of good cheer and go bravely forward to the sick man and say the Lord's Prayer over him. When she was warm, the old woman took her by the hand and led her into the chamber. There he lay, with his long beard and his large and hollow eyes, staring at her. She did not think that he was ugly, and she was not afraid.

“Will you forgive me?” he whispered.

She knew that she ought to say Yes, and so she said Yes. Then he smiled and tried to raise himself, but was powerless to do so. She began at once with the Lord's Prayer, but he made a

movement of protest, and pointed to his breast; and now she laid her two hands on it, for that was what she understood him to mean, and he laid his clammy, ice-cold, bony hand above her little warm hands and then closed his eyes. As he said nothing when she had finished, she did not venture to withdraw her hands, but began anew. When she had done this for the third time the old woman came in, looked at them and said,—

“You may stop, my child, for now he is released.”

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